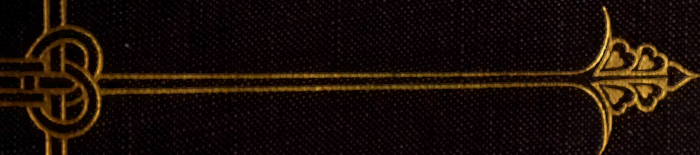


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POEMS OF  
KEATS





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# The Golden Poets

EDITED BY OLIPHANT SMEATON

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## KEATS

SELECTED AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
ARTHUR SYMONS

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FRONTISPIECE AND VIGNETTE TITLE BY A. S. HARTRICK  
COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS BY E. J. SULLIVAN





John Keats.

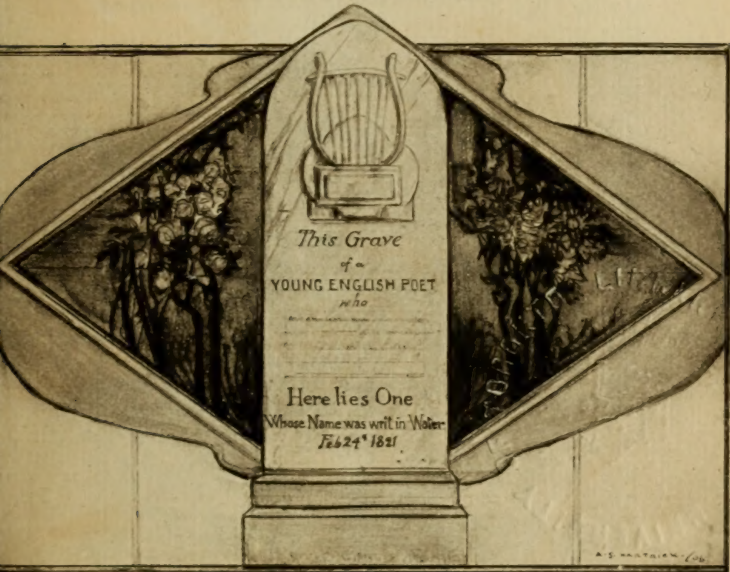




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# POEMS OF KEATS

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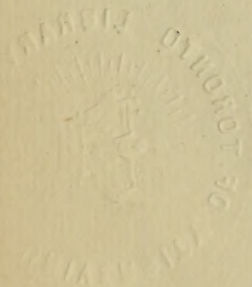


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## INTRODUCTION

**K**EATS had the courage of the intellect **Keats and**  
and the cowardice of the nerves. That **his tem-**  
**perament.**

‘terrier-like resoluteness’ which a school-fellow observed in him as a boy was still strong when the first certainty of his death came to him. ‘Difficulties nerve the spirit of a man,’ he wrote, with a full sense of the truth to himself of what he was saying; and there is genuine intellectual courage in the quaint summing-up: ‘I never quite despair, and I read Shakespeare.’ When the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood* attacked him, he wrote: ‘Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic on his own works.’ But, at the age of seventeen, he could write, with an equally keen self-knowledge: ‘Truth is, I have a horrid morbidity of temperament, which has shown itself at intervals; it is, I have no doubt, the greatest stumbling-block I have to fear; I may surer say, it is likely to be the cause of my disappointment.’ ‘I carry all matters to an ex-

The tyr-  
anny of  
nerves.

treme,' he says elsewhere, 'so that, when I have any little vexation, it grows, in five minutes, into a theme for Sophocles.' To the man who has nerves like this, calmness under emotion is impossible; all that can be asked of him is that he shall realise his own condition, and, as far as may be, make allowances for it. This, until perhaps the very end, when, on his death-bed, he put aside unopened the letters that he dared not read, Keats had always the intellectual strength to do; after the event, if not before it, and generally at the very moment of the event. When he writes most frantically to Fanny Brawne, he confesses, in every other sentence, that he does not really mean what he is saying, at the same time that he cannot help saying it. And are not such letters, written, after all, with so touching a confidence in their being understood, seen through, by the woman to whom they were written, really a kind of thinking aloud? A letter, when it is the expression of emotion, is as momentary as a mood, which may come and go indeed while one is in the act of writing it down, so that a letter of two pages may begin with the bitterest reproaches, and end, just as sincerely, and with no sense of contradiction, in a flood of tenderness. One is loth to believe that Fanny Brawne ever complained of what the critics



have been so ready to complain of on her behalf. She may have understood Keats very little as a poet, and the fact that he tells her nothing of his work seems to show that he was aware of it, and probably more than half indifferent to it; but if she did not understand him as a man, as a lover, if she would have had him change one of his reproaches into a compliment, or wipe out one of the insults of his agony, then she had less of a woman's 'intelligence in love' than it is possible to imagine in a woman beloved by Keats.

Fanny  
Brawne's  
sym-  
pathy.

That man must have loved very calmly and very contentedly, with a strange excess of either materialism or spirituality, who has not felt much of what Keats expressed with so intense and faithful a truth to nature. Keats was not a celestial lover, nor a sentimentalist, nor a cynic. He was earthly in his love, as in the very essence of his imagination; passion was not less a disease to him than the disease of which he died, or than the act of writing verse. Stirred to the very depths of his soul, it was after all through the senses, and with all the aching vividness to which he had trained those senses, that memory came to him. And he was no less critical of love than of everything else in the world; he had no blind beliefs, and there were moments when even poetry seemed

Shifting  
one's  
centre.

to him 'a mere Jack o' Lanthorn to amuse whoever may chance to be struck with its brilliance.' Doubting himself so much, he doubted others, of whose intentions he was less certain; and, in love, doubt is part of that torture without which few persons of imagination would fling themselves quite heartily into the pursuit. Had he been stronger in body, he would have luxuriated in just those lacerating pains which seemed, as it was, to be bringing him daily nearer to the grave. It was always vision that disturbed him, the too keen sense of a physical life going on, perhaps so calmly, so near him, and yet as much beyond his control as if he were at the end of the earth.

Have you ever thought of the frightful thing it is to shift one's centre? That is what it is to love a woman. One's nature no longer radiates freely, from its own centre; the centre itself is shifted, is put outside oneself. Up to then, one may have been unhappy, one may have failed, many things may seem to have gone wrong. But at least there was this security: that one's enemies were all outside the gate. With the woman whom one loves one admits all one's enemies. Think: all one's happiness to depend upon the will of another, on that other's fragility, faith, mutability; on the way life comes to the heart, soul, conscience, nerves of some one

else, no longer the quite sufficient difficulties of a personal heart, soul, conscience, and nerves. Keats no idealist. It is to call in a passing stranger and to say: Guard all my treasures while I sleep. For there is no certainty in the world, beyond the certainty that I am I, and that what is not I can never draw one breath for me, though I were dying for lack of it.

That, or something like it, may well have been Keats' consciousness of the irreparable loss and gain which came to him with his love. He was no idealist, able to create a world of his own, and to live there, breathing its own sharp and trying air of the upper clouds; he wanted the actual green world in which we live, men and women as they move about us, only more continuously perfect; themselves, but without a flaw. He wanted the year to be always at the height of summer, and there is no insect or gross animal, a butterfly or a pig, whom he does not somewhere envy for its power of annihilating every consciousness but that of sensuous delight in the moment. Conscious always that his day was to have so few to-morrows, he clung to every inch of daylight which he could capture before night-time. And there was none of to-morrow's aloofness in his apprehension of human qualities; in his feeling for women, for instance. He demanded of a

**Keats and women.** woman instant and continuous responsiveness to his mood, with a kind of profound nervous selfishness, not entirely under his physical control.

‘I am certain,’ he wrote in a letter, ‘I have no right feeling towards women—at this moment I am striving to be just to them, but I cannot. Is it because they fall so far beneath my boyish imagination? . . . I have no right to expect more than their reality. . . . Is it not extraordinary?—When among men I have no evil thoughts, no malice, no spleen; I feel free to speak or to be silent; I can listen, and from every one I can learn; my hands are in my pockets, I am free from all suspicion, and comfortable. When I am among women, I have evil thoughts, malice, spleen; I cannot speak or be silent; I am full of suspicion, and therefore listen to nothing; I am in a hurry to be gone. . . . I must absolutely get over this—but how?’

In all this there is properly no idealism, but rather a very exacting kind of materialism. His goddess must become flesh and blood, and at once put off and retain godhead. To the idealist, living in a world of imagination, which may indeed easily be a truer world, a world more nearly corresponding to unseen realities, there is no shock at finding earth solid under one’s feet, and dust in the earth. He lives with a life so wholly of the spirit that, to him, only the spirit matters. But to Keats every moment mattered, and the warm actual life



of every moment. His imagination was a <sup>Keats's</sup> faculty which made the experience of actual <sup>imagina-</sup> things more intense, more subtle, more sensi- <sup>tion.</sup> tive to pain and pleasure, but it was concerned always with actual things. He had none of that abstract quality of mind which can take refuge from realities, when they become too pressing and too painful, in an idea. Ideas with him were always the servants, never the masters, of sensation.

What he most desired, all his life, was strength 'to bear unhurt the shock of extreme thought and sensation.' And he cries: 'O for a life of sensations rather than thoughts!' On his death-bed he confessed that 'the intensest pleasure he had received in life was in watching the growth of flowers.' 'I feel the flowers growing over me,' he said, at the last, with a last touch of luxuriousness in his apprehension of the earth. 'Talking of luxuriousness,' he writes in a letter, 'this moment I was writing with one hand, and with the other holding to my mouth a nectarine. Good Lord, how fine! It went down soft and pulpy, slushy, oozy—all its delicious *embonpoint* melted down my throat like a large beatified strawberry.' And, in a much earlier letter, he writes with a not less keen sense of the luxury which lies in discomfort, if only it be apprehended

**His un-  
quench-  
able thirst  
for beauty.**

poignantly enough, to the point at which pain becomes a pleasure: 'I lay awake last night listening to the rain, with a sense of being drowned and rotted like a grain of wheat.' In this sensual ecstasy there is something at once childlike and morbid. It is like a direct draught from the earth, taken with violence. And it is part of his unquenchable thirst for beauty. 'On my word,' he writes, 'I think so little, I have not one opinion upon anything except in matters of taste. I can never feel certain of any truth, but from a clear perception of its beauty.' But Keats, remember, was not the priest of beauty, he was her very human lover, sighing after her feverishly. With him beauty was always a part of feeling, always a thing to quicken his pulses, and send the blood to his forehead; he could no more be calm in the presence of beauty than he could be calm in the presence of the woman he loved. With Shelley beauty was an ideal thing, not to be touched by human hands; his was 'the desire of the moth for the star,' while Keats', if you like, was sometimes that fatal desire of the moth for the candle-flame. It is characteristic that Shelley writes his confession of faith in a 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty'; Keats, in an 'Ode on a Grecian Urn.'

The poetry of Keats is an aspiration towards

happiness, towards the deliciousness of life, <sup>Life in the spirit of art.</sup> towards the restfulness of beauty, towards the delightful sharpness of sensations not too sharp to be painful. He accepted life in the spirit of art, asking only the simple pleasures, which he seemed to be among the few who could not share, of physical health, the capacity to enjoy sensation without being overcome by it. He was not troubled about his soul, the meaning of the universe, or any other metaphysical questions, to which he shows a happy indifference, or rather, a placid unconsciousness. 'I scarcely remember counting upon any happiness,' he notes. 'I look not for it if it be not in the present hour. Nothing startles me beyond the moment. The setting sun will always set me to rights, or if a sparrow were before my window, I take part in its existence, and pick about the gravel.' It is here, perhaps, that he is what people choose to call pagan; though it would be both simpler and truer to say that he is the natural animal, to whom the sense of sin has never whispered itself. Only a cloud makes him uneasy in the sunshine. 'Happy days, or else to die,' he asks for, not aware of any reason why he should not easily be happy under flawless weather. He knows that

' All charms fly  
At the mere touch of cold philosophy,'

Shakespeare's  
negative  
capability.

and he is not cursed with that spirit of analysis which tears our pleasures to pieces, as in a child's hands, to find out, what can never be found out, the secret of their making. In a profound passage on Shakespeare he notes how

'Several things dove-tailed in my mind, and at once it struck me what quality went to form a man of achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean *negative capability*, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason. Coleridge, for instance, would let go a fine isolated verisimilitude, caught from the penetralium of Mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge.'

And so he is willing to linger among imaginative happinesses, satisfyingly, rather than to wander in uneasy search after perhaps troubling certainties. He had a nature to which happiness was natural, until nerves and disease came to disturb it. And so his poetry has only a sort of accidental sadness, reflected back upon it from our consciousness of the shortness of the time he himself had had to enjoy delight.

'And they shall be accounted poet-kings  
Who simply tell the most heart-easing things,'

he says in 'Sleep and Poetry,' and, while he

notes with admiration that Milton 'devoted himself rather to the ardours than the pleasures of song, solacing himself at intervals with cups of old wine,' he adds that 'those are, with some exceptions, the finest parts of the poem.' To him, poetry was always those 'cups of old wine,' a rest in some 'leafy luxury' by the way.

The joy  
from  
nature.

That joy, which is fundamental in Keats, is a quality coming to him straight from nature. But, superadded to this, there is another quality, made up out of unhealthy nerves and something feminine and twisted in the mind, which is almost precisely what it is now the fashion to call decadent. Keats was more than a decadent, but he was a decadent, and such a line as

'One faint eternal eventide of gems,'

might have been written, in jewelled French, by Mallarmé. He luxuriates, almost like Baudelaire, in the details of physical discomfort, in all their grotesque horror, as where, in sleeplessness,

'We put our eyes into a pillowy cleft,  
And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil.'

He is neo-Latin, again like Baudelaire, in his insistence on the physical symptoms of his



Love in  
French  
and  
English  
poetry.

lovers, the bodily translations of emotion. In Venus, leaning over Adonis, he notes

‘When her lips and eyes  
Were closed in sullen moisture, and quick sighs  
Came vexed and panting through her nostrils small;’

and, in a line afterwards revised, he writes at first :

‘By the moist languor of thy breathing face.’

Lycius, in ‘Lamia,’

‘Sick to lose  
The amorous promise of her lone complain,  
Swooned, murmuring of love, and pale with pain;’

and all that swooning and trembling of his lovers, which English critics have found so unmanly, would at all events be very much at home in modern French poetry, where love is again, as it was to Catullus and to Propertius, a sickness, a poisoning, or an exhausting madness. To find anything like the same frank subtlety of expression, we must, in English poetry, go back to the Elizabethan age, to which Keats so often comes as a kind of echo; we may also look forward, and, as Mr. Bridges notes, find it once more in Rossetti and his followers.

Keats, at a time when the phrase had not yet been invented, practised the theory of art

for art's sake. He is the type, not of the poet, **The poet and the artist.** but of the artist. He was not a great personality; his work comes to us as a greater thing than his personality. When we read his verse, we think of the verse, not of John Keats. When we read the verse of Byron, of Shelley, of Wordsworth, we are conscious, in different degrees, of the work being a personal utterance, and it obtains much of its power over us by our consciousness of that fact. But when we read the verse of Keats, we are conscious only of an enchantment which seems to have invented itself. If we think of the writer, we think of him as of a flattering mirror, in which the face of beauty becomes more beautiful; not as of the creator of beauty. We cannot distinguish him from that which he reflects.

And Keats was aware of the fact, and has elaborated it, with a not unnatural application to poets in general, in one of his letters.

'A poet,' he writes, 'is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence, because he has no identity; he is continually in for, and filling, some other body. The sun, the moon, the sea, and men and women, who are creatures of impulse, are poetical, and have about them an unchangeable attribute, the poet has none, no identity. . . . It is a wretched thing to confess, but it is a very fact, that not one word I ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical nature.'

The unconsciousness of genius.

How can it, when I have no nature? . . . The faint conceptions I have of poems to come bring the blood frequently into my forehead. All I hope is, that I may not lose all interest in human affairs—that the solitary indifference I feel for applause, even from the finest spirits, will not blunt any acuteness of vision I may have. I do not think it will. I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the beautiful, even if my night's labours should be burnt every morning, and no eye ever shine upon them. But even now I am perhaps not speaking from myself but from some character in whose soul I now live.'

There, subtly defined, is the temperament of the artist, to whom art is more than life, and who, if he realises that 'Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty,' loves truth for being beautiful and not beauty for its innermost soul of spiritual truth. Very coolly the master of himself when he sat down to write, Keats realised that the finest part of his writing must always be that part which he was least conscious of, as he wrote it down. To have 'no identity'; to be a voice, a vision; to pass on a message, translating it, flawlessly, into another, more easily apprehended, tongue: that was the poet's business amid the cloudy splendours of natural things. His own personality seemed to him to matter hardly more than the strings of the lyre; without which, indeed, there would be no music

audible, but which changed no single note of the music already existing, in an expectant silence. And it is through that humility, in his relations with beauty, that Keats has come nearer than most others to a final expression of whatever he has chosen, or been chosen, to express. Byron has himself to talk about, Coleridge the metaphysics of the universe, Shelley, Wordsworth, each a message of his own which he searches for in natural things rather than elicits from them; but Keats is the one quite perfect lover, offering and asking nothing, all blind devotion, and with an inexhaustible memory for delight.

**Finality of  
expres-  
sion.**

In his most famous line he has said, once for all:

‘A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.’

Well, his own poetry has much of this joy, only a little pensive, as a human reflection steals in upon it now and again, of beautiful, changeless things, new every season, or every morning, or every minute, but returning, with inevitable patience, as long as time goes on. He is watching

‘How tip-toe Night holds back her dark-grey hood,’

and deems but to give choice words to the

**The measurement of distance and time.** sight; seeming even to come more minutely close to the exact form and sound of things,

‘As when heard anew  
Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the shore,  
Down whose green back the short-lived foam, all hoar,  
Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence.’

He has that power, which he rightly attributes to Milton, of ‘stationing’: ‘he is not content with simple description, he must station.’ He cannot name daffodils without seeing ‘the green world they live in.’ Distance, or the time of day, must be measured visibly:—

‘There she stood  
About a young bird’s flutter from a wood,’

he tells us of Lamia waiting for Lycius; and when Lycius comes to meet her, it is

‘On the moth-time of that evening dim.’

As Venus, in ‘Endymion,’ descends from heaven to find Adonis, the silent wheels of her car,

‘Fresh wet from clouds of morn,  
Spun off a drizzling dew, which falling chill  
On soft Adonis’ shoulders, made him still  
Nestle and turn uneasily about;’

and the doves, as they come near the ground, are seen with ‘silken traces lightened in descent.’ And, with Keats, abstract things become not less visibly apportioned to their corner of



the universe than the things which we call actual. Precision  
in epi-  
thets.

‘Obstinate silence came heavily again,  
Feeling about for its old couch of space  
And airy cradle.’

But his truth to nature, as we call it, to his own apprehension of things seen and felt, is always a beautiful truth, differing in this from some of those poets who have tried to come closest to realities. There are moments, rare enough, when he forgets his own wise care in this matter, and writes of one who

‘Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow,  
And twanged it inwardly.’

But, even earlier than this, which we find in ‘Endymion,’ he has learnt the secret of precision in beauty, and, at twenty-two, can evoke for us the myrtle that

‘Lifts its sweet head into the air, and feeds  
A silent space with ever-sprouting green.’

He tells us, but always in beautiful words, because in words born of that ‘lust of the eyes’ which in him was inseparable from sight, of ‘the tiger-moth’s deep-damasked wings,’ of ‘the lidless-eyed train of planets,’ of the ‘chuckling’ linnnet, the ‘low creeping’ strawberries, the ‘freckled’ wings of the butterflies. He realised at every moment that

‘The poetry of Earth is never dead,’

Keats's  
tender-  
ness of  
nature.

and it seemed to him a simple thing to transplant that poetry into his pages, as one transplants a root from the woods into one's own garden. All the tenderness of his nature seemed to go out to the green things which grow in the soil, to trees and plants and flowers, the whole 'leafy world'; as all his feeling for the spiritual part of sensation, for the ideal, if you will, went out to the moon.

'Thy starry sway  
Has been an under-passion to this hour,'

he cries, in 'Endymion'; and it is to the moon, always, that he looks for the closest symbols of poetry.

Keats has a firm common sense of the imagination, seeming to be at home in it, as if it were literally this world, and not the dream of another. Thus, in his most serious moments, he can jest with it, as men do with those they live with and love most. 'The beauty of the morning operating on a sense of idleness' is enough to set him on a distant journey, in a moment of time; and he can reason about the matter so subtly and in such eloquent prose as this:—

'Now it appears to me that almost any man may, like the spider, spin from his own inwards, his own airy citadel. The points of leaves and

twigs on which the spider begins her work are few, and she fills the air with a beautiful circuiting. Man should be content with as few points to tip with the fine web of his soul, and weave a tapestry empyrean—full of symbols for his spiritual eye, of softness for his spiritual touch, of space for his wanderings, of distinctness for his luxury. But the minds of mortals are so different, and bent on such diverse journeys, that it may at first appear impossible for any common taste and fellowship to exist between two or three under these suppositions. It is, however, quite the contrary. Minds would leave each other in contrary directions, traverse each other in numberless points, and at last greet each other at the journey's end. An old man and a child would talk together, and the old man be led on his path and the child left thinking.'

His pas-  
sivity and  
recep-  
tivity.

'Man should not dispute or assert, but whisper results to his neighbour,' he affirms; 'let us open our leaves like a flower, and be passive and receptive, budding patiently under the eye of Apollo, and taking hints from every noble insect that favours us with a visit.' That passive and receptive mood was always his own attitude towards the visitings of the imagination; he was always 'looking on the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth and its contents, as materials to form greater things'; always waiting, now 'all of a tremble from not having written anything of late,' now vainly

Keats and  
Shelley.

longing to 'compose without fever,' now reminding a friend: 'If you should have any reason to regret this state of excitement in me, I will turn the tide of your feelings in the right channel by mentioning that it is the only state for the best kind of poetry—that is all I care for, all I live for.' Perhaps it is this waiting mood, a kind of electrically charged expectancy which draws its own desire to itself out of the universe, that Mr. Bridges means when he speaks of Keats' 'unbroken and unflagging earnestness, which is so utterly unconscious and unobservant of itself as to be almost unmatched.' In its dependence on a kind of direct inspiration, the fidelity to first thoughts, it accounts, perhaps, for much of what is technically deficient in his poetry.

When Keats gave his famous counsel to Shelley, urging him to 'load every rift with ore,' he expressed a significant criticism, both of his own and of Shelley's work. With Shelley, even though he may at times seem to become vague in thought, there is always an intellectual structure; Keats, definite in every word, in every image, lacks intellectual structure. He saw words as things, and he saw them one at a time. 'I look upon fine phrases like a lover,' he confessed, but with him the fine phrase was but the translation of a thing

actually seen by the imagination. He was conscious of the need there is for the poet to be something more than a creature of sensations, but even his consciousness of this necessity is that of one to whom knowledge is merely an aid to flight. 'The difference,' he says, in a splendid sentence, 'of high sensations, with and without knowledge, appears to me this: in the latter case we are continually falling ten thousand fathoms deep, and being blown up again, without wings, and with all the horror of a bare-shouldered creature; in the former case our shoulders are fledged, and we go through the same air and space without fear.' When Keats wrote poetry he knew that he was writing poetry; naturally as it came to him, he never fancied that he was but expressing himself, or putting down something which his own mind had realised for its own sake. 'The imagination,' he tells us, in a phrase which has become famous, 'may be compared to Adam's dream—he awoke and found it truth.' Only Keats, unlike most other poets, never slept, or, it may be, never awoke. Poetry was literally almost everything to him; and he could deal with it so objectively, as with a thing outside himself, precisely because it was an almost bodily part of him, like the hand he wrote with. 'If poetry,' he said, in

Poetry his  
all in all.



**“Load every rift with ore.”**

an axiom sent to his publisher, ‘comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all.’ And so, continually, eagerly, instinctively, yet in a way unconsciously, he was lying in wait for that winged, shy guest, the ‘magic casements’ always open on the ‘perilous seas.’ ‘The only thing,’ he said, ‘that can ever affect me personally for more than one short passing day is any doubt about my powers for poetry: I seldom have any; and I look with hope to the nighing time when I shall have none.’ His belief that he should ‘be among the English poets after his death’ meant more to him, undoubtedly, than such a conviction usually means, even to those most careful of fame. It was his ideal world, the only aspect of spiritual things which he ever saw or cared to see; and the thought of poetry, apprehended for its own sake as the only entirely satisfying thing in the world, imprisoned him as within a fairy ring, alone with his little circle of green grass and blue sky.

‘To load every rift with ore’: that, to Keats, was the essential thing; and it meant to pack the verse with poetry, with the stuff of the imagination, so that every line should be heavy with it. For the rest, the poem is to come as best it may; only once, in ‘Lamia,’ with

any real skill in narrative, or any care for that skill. There, doubtless, it was the passing influence of Dryden which set him upon a kind of experiment, which he may have done largely for the experiment's sake; doing it, of course, consummately. 'Hyperion' was another kind of experiment; and this time, for all its splendour, less personal to his own style, or way of feeling. 'I have given up "Hyperion,"' he writes; 'there were too many Miltonic inversions in it—Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful, or, rather, artist's humour. I wish to give myself up to other sensations.' He asks Reynolds to pick out some lines from 'Hyperion,' and put a mark, x, to the false beauty, proceeding from art, and 1, 2, to the true voice of feeling. It is just then that he discovers Chatterton to be 'the purest writer in the English language.' A little later he decides that 'the marvellous is the most enticing, and the surest guarantee of harmonious numbers,' and so decides, somewhat against his inclination, he professes, to 'untether Fancy, and to let her manage for herself.' 'I and myself cannot agree about this at all,' is his conclusion; but 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' follows, and that opening of 'The Eve of St. Mark,' which seems to contain the germ of both Rossetti and Morris,

Keats on  
Hyperion.

Keats's  
sense of  
form.

going, as it does, so far along the road that Chatterton had opened up and then wilfully closed. It was just because Keats was so much, so exclusively, possessed by his own imagination, so exclusively concerned with the shaping of it into poetry, that all his poems seem to have been written for the sake of something else than their story, or thought, or indeed emotion. Even the odes are mental picture added to mental picture, separate stanza added to separate stanza, rather than the development of a thought which must express itself, creating its own form. Meditation brings to him no inner vision, no rapture of the soul; but seems to germinate upon the page in actual flowers and corn and fruit.

Keats' sense of form, if by form is meant perfection rather of outline than of detail, was by no means certain. Most poets work only in outline: Keats worked on every inch of his surface. Perhaps no poet has ever packed so much poetic detail into so small a space, or been so satisfied with having done so. Metrically, he is often slipshod; with all his genius for words, he often uses them incorrectly, or with but a vague sense of their meaning; even in the 'Ode to a Nightingale' he will leave lines in which the inspiration seems suddenly to flag; such lines as

‘Though the dull brain perplexes and retards,’  
which is nerveless ; or

**Keats and  
Words-  
worth.**

‘ In ancient days by emperor and clown,’

where the antithesis, logically justifiable, has the sound of an antithesis brought in for the sake of rhyme. In the ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn,’ two lines near the end seem to halt by the way, are not firm and direct in movement :—

‘Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say’st.’

That is slipshod writing, both as intellectual and as metrical structure ; and it occurs in a poem which is one of the greatest lyrical poems in the language. We have only to look closely enough to see numberless faults of this kind in Keats ; and yet, if we do not look very closely, we shall not see them ; and, however closely we may look, and however many faults we may find, we shall end, as we began, by realising that they do not essentially matter. Why is this ?

Wordsworth, who at his best may seem to be the supreme master of poetical style, is often out of key ; Shelley, who at his best may seem to be almost the supreme singer, is often prosaic : Keats is never prosaic and never out of key. To read Wordsworth or Shelley, you must get in touch with their ideas, at least apprehend

The point  
of view of  
the sun-  
light.

them ; to read Keats you have only to surrender your senses to their natural happiness. You have to get at Shelley's or Wordsworth's point of view ; but Keats has only the point of view of the sunlight. He cannot write without making pictures with his words, and every picture has its own atmosphere. Tennyson, who learnt so much from Keats, learnt from him something of his skill in making pictures ; but Tennyson's pictures are chill, conscious of themselves, almost colourless. The pictures of Keats are all aglow with colour, not always very accurate painter's colour, but colour which captivates or overwhelms the senses. 'The Eve of St. Agnes' is hardly more than a description of luxurious things : 'lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon,' a bed, with 'blanched linen, smooth and lavender'd,' moonlight through painted windows, 'warmed jewels'; yet every word throbs with emotion, as the poet 'grows faint' with the lover. Tennyson's 'Palace of Art' is full of pictures, each in its frame, or of statues, each in its niche ; but the pictures and statues are no more than decorations in a house 'of thought, somewhat too methodically arranged there. To Keats, the thing itself and the emotion were indistinguishable ; he never saw without feeling, and he never felt without passion. That is why he can call up atmosphere by



the mere bewitchment of a verse which seems to make a casual statement; because nothing, with him, can be a casual statement, nothing can be prosaic, or conceived of coldly, apart from that 'principle of beauty in all things' which he tells us that he had always loved, and which to him was the principle of life itself.

**Beauty in  
all things.**

ARTHUR SYMONS.



# NARRATIVE & ROMANTIC POEMS

## ENDYMION

### HYMN TO PAN

O THOU, whose mighty palace roof doth hang  
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth  
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death  
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness ;  
Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress  
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken ;  
And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken  
The dreary melody of bedded reeds—  
In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds  
The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth ;  
Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth  
Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx—do thou now,  
By thy love's milky brow !  
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,  
Hear us, great Pan !

'O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles  
Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,  
What time thou wanderest at eventide  
Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side  
Of thine enmosséd realms : O thou, to whom  
Broad-leavéd fig-trees even now foredoom

Their ripen'd fruitage ; yellow-girted bees  
 Their golden honeycombs ; our village leas  
 Their fairest blossom'd beans and popped corn ;  
 The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,  
 To sing for thee ; low creeping strawberries  
 Their summer coolness ; pent up butterflies  
 Their freckled wings ; yea, the fresh budding year  
 All its completions—be quickly near,  
 By every wind that nods the mountain pine,  
 O forester divine !

'Thou, to whom every faun and satyr flies  
 For willing service ; whether to surprise  
 The squatted hare while in half sleeping fit ;  
 Or upward ragged precipices flit  
 To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw ;  
 Or by mysterious enticement draw  
 Bewildered shepherds to their path again ;  
 Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,  
 And gather up all fancifullest shells  
 For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,  
 And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping ;  
 Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,  
 The while they pelt each other on the crown  
 With silvery oak apples, and fir cones brown—  
 By all the echoes that about thee ring,  
 Hear us, O satyr king !

' O Hearer to the loud clapping shears  
 While ever and anon to his shorn peers  
 A ram goes bleating : Winder of the horn,  
 When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn  
 Anger our huntsmen : Breather round our farms,

To keep off mildews, and all weather harms :  
 Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,  
 That come a-swooning over hollow grounds,  
 And wither drearily on barren moors :  
 Dread opener of the mysterious doors  
 Leading to universal knowledge—see,  
 Great son of Dryope,  
 The many that are come to pay their vows  
 With leaves about their brows !

‘ Be still the unimaginable lodge  
 For solitary thinkings ; such as dodge  
 Conception to the very bourne of heaven,  
 Then leave the naked brain : be still the leaven,  
 That spreading in this dull and clodded earth  
 Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth :  
 Be still a symbol of immensity ;  
 A firmament reflected in a sea ;  
 An element filling the space between ;  
 An unknown—but no more : we humbly screen  
 With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,  
 And giving out a shout most heaven-rending,  
 Conjure thee to receive our humble Pæan,  
 Upon thy Mount Lycean ! ’

Bk. I., ll. 232-306.

#### ENDYMION IN NEPTUNE'S PALACE

THERE are who lord it o'er their fellow-men  
 With most prevailing tinsel : who unpen  
 Their baaing vanities, to browse away  
 The comfortable green and juicy hay



From human pastures ; or, O torturing fact !  
Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack'd  
Fire-branded foxes to sear up and singe  
Our gold and ripe-ear'd hopes. With not one  
tinge

Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight  
Able to face an owl's, they still are dight  
By the blear-ey'd nation in empurpled vests,  
And crowns, and turbans. With unladen breasts,  
Save of blown self-applause, they proudly mount  
To their spirit's perch, their being's high account,  
Their tiptop nothings, their dull skies, their thrones—  
Amid the fierce intoxicating tones  
Of trumpets, shoutings, and belabour'd drums,  
And sudden cannon. Ah ! how all this hums,  
In wakeful ears, like uproar past and gone—  
Like thunder clouds that spake to Babylon,  
And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks.—  
Are then regalities all gilded masks ?  
No, there are throned seats unscalable  
But by a patient wing, a constant spell,  
Or by ethereal things that, unconfin'd,  
Can make a ladder of the eternal wind,  
And poize about in cloudy thunder-tents  
To watch the abysm-birth of elements.  
Aye, 'bove the withering of old-lipp'd Fate  
A thousand Powers keep religious state,  
In water, fiery realm, and airy bourne ;  
And, silent as a consecrated urn,  
Hold spherey sessions for a season due.  
Yet few of these far majesties, ah, few !  
Have bar'd their operations to this globe—  
Few, who with gorgeous pageantry enrobe

Our piece of heaven—whose benevolence  
Shakes hand with our own Ceres ; every sense  
Filling with spiritual sweets to plenitude,  
As bees gorge full their cells. And, by the feud  
'Twi'x Nothing and Creation, I here swear,  
Eterne Apollo ! that thy Sister fair  
Is of all these the gentlier-mightiest.  
When thy gold breath is misting in the west,  
She unobserved steals unto her throne,  
And there she sits most meek and most alone ;  
As if she had not pomp subservient ;  
As if thine eye, high Poet ! was not bent  
Towards her with the Muses in thine heart ;  
As if the ministring stars kept not apart,  
Waiting for silver-footed messages.  
O Moon ! the oldest shades 'mong oldest trees  
Feel palpitations when thou lookest in :  
O Moon ! old boughs lisp forth a holier din  
The while they feel thine airy fellowship.  
Thou dost bless every where, with silver lip  
Kissing dead things to life. The sleeping kine,  
Couch'd in thy brightness, dream of fields divine :  
Innumerable mountains rise, and rise,  
Ambitious for the hallowing of thine eyes ;  
And yet thy benediction passeth not  
One obscure hiding-place, one little spot  
Where pleasure may be sent : the nested wren  
Has thy fair face within its tranquil ken,  
And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf  
Takes glimpses of thee ; thou art a relief  
To the poor patient oyster, where it sleeps  
Within its pearly house.—The mighty deeps,  
The monstrous sea is thine—the myriad sea !

O Moon! far-spooming Ocean bows to thee,  
And Tellus feels his forehead's cumbrous load.

Cynthia! where art thou now? What far abode  
Of green or silvery bower doth enshrine  
Such utmost beauty? Alas, thou dost pine  
For one as sorrowful: thy cheek is pale  
For one whose cheek is pale: thou dost bewail  
His tears, who weeps for thee. Where dost thou  
sigh?

Ah! surely that light peeps from Vesper's eye,  
Or what a thing is love! 'Tis She, but lo!  
How chang'd, how full of ache, how gone in woe!  
She dies at the thinnest cloud; her loveliness  
Is wan on Neptune's blue: yet there's a stress  
Of love-spangles, just off yon cape of trees,  
Dancing upon the waves, as if to please  
The curly foam with amorous influence.  
O, not so idle: for down-glancing thence  
She fathoms eddies, and runs wild about  
O'erwhelming water-courses; scaring out  
The thorny sharks from hiding-holes, and fright'ning  
Their savage eyes with unaccustom'd lightning.  
Where will the splendour be content to reach?  
O love! how potent hast thou been to teach  
Strange journeyings! Wherever beauty dwells,  
In gulph or aerie, mountains or deep dells,  
In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun,  
Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won.  
Amid his toil thou gav'st Leander breath;  
Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of death;  
Thou madest Pluto bear thin element;  
And now, O wingéd Chieftain! thou hast sent

A moon-beam to the deep, deep water-world,  
To find Endymion.

On gold sand impearl'd  
With lilly shells, and pebbles milky white,  
Poor Cynthia greeted him, and sooth'd her light  
Against his pallid face : he felt the charm  
To breathlessness, and suddenly a warm  
Of his heart's blood : 'twas very sweet ; he stay'd  
His wandering steps, and half-entrancéd laid  
His head upon a tuft of straggling weeds,  
To taste the gentle moon, and freshening beads,  
Lash'd from the crystal roof by fishes' tails.  
And so he kept, until the rosy veils  
Mantling the east, by Aurora's peering hand  
Were lifted from the water's breast, and fann'd  
Into sweet air ; and sober'd morning came  
Meekly through billows :—when like taper-flame  
Left sudden by a dallying breath of air,  
He rose in silence, and once more 'gan fare  
Along his fated way.

Far had he roam'd,  
With nothing save the hollow vast, that foam'd,  
Above, around, and at his feet ; save things  
More dead than Morpheus' imaginings :  
Old rusted anchors, helmets, breast-plates large  
Of gone sea-warriors ; brazen beaks and targe ;  
Rudders that for a hundred years had lost  
The sway of human hand ; gold vase emboss'd  
With long-forgotten story, and wherein  
No reveller had ever dipp'd a chin  
But those of Saturn's vintage ; mouldering scrolls,  
Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls

Who first were on the earth ; and sculptures rude  
 In ponderous stone, developing the mood  
 Of ancient Nox ;—then skeletons of man,  
 Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan,  
 And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw  
 Of nameless monster. A cold leaden awe  
 These secrets struck into him ; and unless  
 Dian had chac'd away that heaviness,  
 He might have di'd : but now, with cheeréd feel,  
 He onward kept ; wooing these thoughts to steal  
 About the labyrinth in his soul of love.

‘ What is there in thee, Moon ! that thou shouldst  
 move

My heart so potently ? When yet a child  
 I oft have dry'd my tears when thou hast smil'd.  
 Thou seem'dst my sister : hand in hand we went  
 From eve to morn across the firmament.  
 No apples would I gather from the tree,  
 Till thou hadst cool'd their cheeks deliciously :  
 No tumbling water ever spake romance,  
 But when my eyes with thine thereon could dance :  
 No woods were green enough, no bower divine,  
 Until thou liftedst up thine eyelids fine :  
 In sowing time ne'er would I dibble take,  
 Or drop a seed, till thou wast wide awake ;  
 And, in the summer tide of blossoming,  
 No one but thee hath heard me blythly sing  
 And mesh my dewy flowers all the night  
 No melody was like a passing spright  
 If it went not to solemnize thy reign.  
 Yes, in my boyhood, every joy and pain  
 By thee were fashion'd to the self-same end ;



And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend  
With all my ardours : thou wast the deep glen ;  
Thou wast the mountain-top—the sage's pen—  
The poet's harp—the voice of friends—the sun ;  
Thou wast the river—thou wast glory won ;  
Thou wast my clarion's blast—thou wast my steed—  
My goblet full of wine—my topmost deed :—  
Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon !  
O what a wild and harmonized tune  
My spirit struck from all the beautiful !  
On some bright essence could I lean, and lull  
Myself to immortality : I prest  
Nature's soft pillow in a wakeful rest.  
But, gentle Orb ! there came a nearer bliss—  
My strange love came—Felicity's abyss !  
She came, and thou didst fade, and fade away—  
Yet not entirely ; no, thy starry sway  
Has been an under-passion to this hour.  
Now I begin to feel thine orby power  
Is coming fresh upon me : O be kind,  
Keep back thine influence, and do not blind  
My sovereign vision.—Dearest love, forgive  
That I can think away from thee and live!—  
Pardon me, airy planet, that I prize  
One thought beyond thine argent luxuries !  
How far beyond !' At this a surpris'd start  
Frosted the springing verdure of his heart ;  
For as he lifted up his eyes to swear  
How his own goddess was past all things fair,  
He saw far in the concave green of the sea  
An old man sitting calm and peacefully.  
Upon a weeded rock this old man sat,  
And his white hair was awful, and a mat

Of weeds were cold beneath his cold thin feet ;  
 And, ample as the largest winding-sheet,  
 A cloak of blue wrapp'd up his aged bones,  
 O'erwrought with symbols by the deepest groans  
 Of ambitious magic : every ocean-form  
 Was woven in with black distinctness ; storm,  
 And calm, and whispering, and hideous roar,  
 Quicksand, and whirlpool, and deserted shore,  
 Were emblem'd in the woof ; with every shape  
 That skims, or dives, or sleeps, 'twixt cape and cape.  
 The gulping whale was like a dot in the spell,  
 Yet look upon it, and 'twould size and swell  
 To its huge self ; and the minutest fish  
 Would pass the very hardest gazer's wish,  
 And show his little eye's anatomy.  
 Then there was pictur'd the regality  
 Of Neptune ; and the sea nymphs round his state,  
 In beauteous vassalage, look up and wait.  
 Beside this old man lay a pearly wand,  
 And in his lap a book, the which he conn'd  
 So stedfastly, that the new denizen  
 Had time to keep him in amazéd ken,  
 To mark these shadowings, and stand in awe.

The old man rais'd his hoary head and saw  
 The wilder'd stranger—seeming not to see,  
 His features were so lifeless. Suddenly  
 He woke as from a trance ; his snow-white brows  
 Went arching up, and like two magic ploughs  
 Furrow'd deep wrinkles in his forehead large,  
 Which kept as fixedly as rocky marge,  
 Till round his wither'd lips had gone a smile.  
 Then up he rose, like one whose tedious toil

Had watch'd for years in forlorn hermitage,  
Who had not from mid-life to utmost age  
Eas'd in one accent his o'er-burden'd soul,  
Even to the trees. He rose : he grasp'd his stole,  
With convuls'd clenches waving it abroad,  
And in a voice of solemn joy, that aw'd  
Echo into oblivion, he said :—

‘Thou art the man ! Now shall I lay my head  
In peace upon my watery pillow : now  
Sleep will come smoothly to my weary brow.  
O Jove ! I shall be young again, be young !  
O shell-borne Neptune, I am pierc'd and stung  
With new-born life ! What shall I do ? Where go,  
When I have cast this serpent-skin of woe ?—  
I'll swim to the syrens, and one moment listen  
Their melodies, and see their long hair glisten ;  
Anon upon that giant's arm I'll be,  
That writhes about the roots of Sicily :  
To northern seas I'll in a twinkling sail,  
And mount upon the snortings of a whale  
To some black cloud ; thence down I'll madly sweep  
On forkéd lightning, to the deepest deep,  
Where through some sucking pool I will be hurl'd  
With rapture to the other side of the world !  
O, I am full of gladness ! Sisters three,  
I bow full hearted to your old decree !  
Yes, every god be thank'd, and power benign,  
For I no more shall wither, droop, and pine.  
Thou art the man !’ Endymion started back  
Dismay'd ; and, like a wretch from whom the rack  
Tortures hot breath, and speech of agony,  
Mutter'd : ‘What lonely death am I to die

In this cold region? Will he let me freeze,  
 And float my brittle limbs o'er polar seas?  
 Or will he touch me with his searing hand,  
 And leave a black memorial on the sand?  
 Or tear me piece-meal with a bony saw,  
 And keep me as a chosen food to draw  
 His magian fish through hated fire and flame?  
 O misery of hell! resistless, tame,  
 Am I to be burnt up? No, I will shout,  
 Until the gods through heaven's blue look out!—  
 O Tartarus! but some few days ago  
 Her soft arms were entwining me, and on  
 Her voice I hung like fruit among green leaves:  
 Her lips were all my own, and—ah, ripe sheaves  
 Of happiness! ye on the stubble droop,  
 But never may be garner'd. I must stoop  
 My head, and kiss death's foot. Love! love, fare-  
 well!

Is there no hope from thee? This horrid spell  
 Would melt at thy sweet breath.—By Dian's hind  
 Feeding from her white fingers, on the wind  
 I see thy streaming hair! and now, by Pan,  
 I care not for this old mysterious man!'

He spake, and walking to that aged form,  
 Look'd high defiance. Lo! his heart 'gan warm  
 With pity, for the grey-hair'd creature wept.  
 Had he then wrong'd a heart where sorrow kept?  
 Had he, though blindly contumelious, brought  
 Rheum to kind eyes, a sting to humane thought,  
 Convulsion to a mouth of many years?  
 He had in truth; and he was ripe for tears.  
 The penitent shower fell, as down he knelt

Before that care-worn sage, who trembling felt  
About his large dark locks, and faltering spake :

‘ Arise, good youth, for sacred Phœbus’ sake !  
I know thine inmost bosom, and I feel  
A very brother’s yearning for thee steal  
Into mine own : for why ? thou openest  
The prison gates that have so long opprest  
My weary watching. Though thou know’st it not,  
Thou art commission’d to this fated spot  
For great enfranchisement. O weep no more ;  
I am a friend to love, to loves of yore :  
Aye, hadst thou never lov’d an unknown power,  
I had been grieving at this joyous hour.  
But even now most miserable old,  
I saw thee, and my blood no longer cold  
Gave mighty pulses : in this tottering case  
Grew a new heart, which at this moment plays  
As dancingly as thine. Be not afraid,  
For thou shalt hear this secret all display’d,  
Now as we speed towards our joyous task.’

So saying, this young soul in age’s mask  
Went forward with the Carian side by side :  
Resuming quickly thus ; while ocean’s tide  
Hung swollen at their backs, and jewel’d sands  
Took silently their foot-prints.

‘ My soul stands  
Now past the midway from mortality,  
And so I can prepare without a sigh  
To tell thee briefly all my joy and pain.  
I was a fisher once, upon this main,



And my boat danc'd in every creek and bay ;  
Rough billows were my home by night and day,—  
The sea-gulls not more constant ; for I had  
No housing from the storm and tempests mad,  
But hollow rocks,—and they were palaces  
Of silent happiness, of slumberous ease :  
Long years of misery have told me so.  
Aye, thus it was one thousand years ago.  
One thousand years !—Is it then possible  
To look so plainly through them ? to dispel  
A thousand years with backward glance sublime ?  
To breathe away as 'twere all scummy slime  
From off a crystal pool, to see its deep,  
And one's own image from the bottom peep ?  
Yes : now I am no longer wretched thrall,  
My long captivity and moanings all  
Are but a slime, a thin-pervading scum,  
The which I breathe away, and thronging come  
Like things of yesterday my youthful pleasures.

'I touch'd no lute, I sang not, trod no measures :  
I was a lonely youth on desert shores.  
My sports were lonely, 'mid continuous roars,  
And craggy isles, and sea-mew's plaintive cry  
Plaining discrepant between sea and sky.  
Dolphins were still my playmates ; shapes unseen  
Would let me feel their scales of gold and green,  
Nor be my desolation ; and, full oft,  
When a dread waterspout had rear'd aloft  
Its hungry hugeness, seeming ready ripe  
To burst with hoarsest thunderings, and wipe  
My life away like a vast sponge of fate,  
Some friendly monster, pitying my sad state,

Has div'd to its foundations, gulph'd it down,  
And left me tossing safely. But the crown  
Of all my life was utmost quietude :  
More did I love to lie in cavern rude,  
Keeping in wait whole days for Neptune's voice,  
And if it came at last, hark, and rejoice !  
There blush'd no summer eve but I would steer  
My skiff along green shelving coasts, to hear  
The shepherd's pipe come clear from aery steep,  
Mingled with ceaseless bleatings of his sheep :  
And never was a day of summer shine,  
But I beheld its birth upon the brine :  
For I would watch all night to see unfold  
Heaven's gates, and Æthon snort his morning gold  
Wide o'er the swelling streams : and constantly  
At brim of day-tide, on some grassy lea,  
My nets would be spread out, and I at rest.  
The poor folk of the sea-country I blest  
With daily boon of fish most delicate :  
They knew not whence this bounty, and elate  
Would strew sweet flowers on a sterile beach.

' Why was I not contented ? Wherefore reach  
At things which, but for thee, O Latmian !  
Had been my dreary death ? Fool ! I began  
To feel distemper'd longings : to desire  
The utmost privilege that ocean's sire  
Could grant in benediction : to be free  
Of all his kingdom. Long in misery  
I wasted, ere in one extremest fit  
I plung'd for life or death. To interknit  
One's senses with so dense a breathing stuff  
Might seem a work of pain ; so not enough

Can I admire how crystal-smooth it felt,  
 And buoyant round my limbs. At first I dwelt  
 Whole days and days in sheer astonishment ;  
 Forgetful utterly of self-intent ;  
 Moving but with the mighty ebb and flow.  
 Then, like a new fledg'd bird that first doth  
 show

His spreaded feathers to the morrow chill,  
 I try'd in fear the pinions of my will.  
 'Twas freedom ! and at once I visited  
 The ceaseless wonders of this ocean-bed.  
 No need to tell thee of them, for I see  
 That thou hast been a witness—it must be—  
 For these I know thou canst not feel a drouth,  
 By the melancholy corners of that mouth.  
 So I will in my story straightway pass  
 To more immediate matter. Woe, alas !  
 That love should be my bane ! Ah, Scylla fair !  
 Why did poor Glaucus ever—ever dare  
 To sue thee to his heart ? Kind stranger-youth !  
 I lov'd her to the very white of truth,  
 And she would not conceive it. Timid thing !  
 She fled me swift as sea-bird on the wing,  
 Round every isle, and point, and promontory,  
 From where large Hercules wound up his story  
 Far as Egyptian Nile. My passion grew  
 The more, the more I saw her dainty hue  
 Gleam delicately through the azure clear :  
 Until 'twas too fierce agony to bear ;  
 And in that agony, across my grief  
 It flash'd, that Circe might find some relief—  
 Cruel enchantress ! So above the water  
 I rear'd my head, and look'd for Phœbus' daughter.

Ææa's isle was wondering at the moon :—  
It seem'd to whirl around me, and a swoon  
Left me dead-drifting to that fatal power.

'When I awoke, 'twas in a twilight bower ;  
Just when the light of morn, with hum of bees,  
Stole through its verdurous matting of fresh trees.  
How sweet, and sweeter ! for I heard a lyre,  
And over it a sighing voice expire.  
It ceas'd—I caught light footsteps ; and anon  
The fairest face that morn e'er look'd upon  
Push'd through a screen of roses. Starry Jove !  
With tears, and smiles, and honey-words she wove  
A net whose thraldom was more bliss than all  
The range of flower'd Elysium. Thus did fall  
The dew of her rich speech : " Ah ! Art awake ?  
O let me hear thee speak, for Cupid's sake !  
I am so oppress'd with joy ! Why, I have shed  
An urn of tears, as though thou wert cold dead ;  
And now I find thee living, I will pour  
From these devoted eyes their silver store,  
Until exhausted of the latest drop,  
So it will pleasure thee, and force thee stop  
Here, that I too may live : but if beyond  
Such cool and sorrowful offerings, thou are fond  
Of soothing warmth, of dalliance supreme ;  
If thou art ripe to taste a long love dream ;  
If smiles, if dimples, tongues for ardour mute,  
Hang in thy vision like a tempting fruit,  
O let me pluck it for thee." Thus she link'd  
Her charming syllables, till indistinct  
Their music came to my o'er-sweeten'd soul ;  
And then she hover'd over me, and stole

So near, that if no nearer it had been  
This furrow'd visage thou hadst never seen.

‘Young man of Latmos! thus particular  
Am I, that thou may'st plainly see how far  
This fierce temptation went: and thou may'st not  
Exclaim, How then, was Scylla quite forgot?

‘Who could resist? Who in this universe?  
She did so breathe ambrosia; so immerse  
My fine existence in a golden clime.  
She took me like a child of suckling time,  
And cradled me in roses. Thus condemn'd,  
The current of my former life was stemm'd,  
And to this arbitrary queen of sense  
I bow'd a trancéd vassal: nor would thence  
Have mov'd, even though Amphion's harp had  
woo'd

Me back to Scylla o'er the billows rude.  
For as Apollo each eve doth devise  
A new appareling for western skies;  
So every eve, nay every spendthrift hour  
Shed balmy consciousness within that bower.  
And I was free of haunts umbrageous;  
Could wander in the mazy forest-house  
Of squirrels, foxes shy, and antler'd deer,  
And birds from coverts innermost and drear  
Warbling for very joy mellifluous sorrow—  
To me new born delights!

‘Now let me borrow,  
For moments few, a temperament as stern  
As Pluto's sceptre, that my words not burn



These uttering lips, while I in calm speech tell  
How specious heaven was changed to real hell.

‘One morn she left me sleeping : half awake  
I sought for her smooth arms and lips, to slake  
My greedy thirst with nectarous camel-draughts ;  
But she was gone. Whereat the barbed shafts  
Of disappointment stuck in me so sore,  
That out I ran and search’d the forest o’er.  
Wandering about in pine and cedar gloom  
Damp awe assail’d me ; for there ’gan to boom  
A sound of moan, an agony of sound,  
Sepulchral from the distance all around.  
Then came a conquering earth-thunder, and rumbled  
That fierce complain to silence : while I stumbled  
Down a precipitous path, as if impell’d.  
I came to a dark valley.—Groanings swell’d  
Poisonous about my ears, and louder grew,  
The nearer I approach’d a flame’s gaunt blue,  
That glar’d before me through a thorny brake.  
This fire, like the eye of gordian snake,  
Bewitch’d me towards ; and I soon was near  
A sight too fearful for the feel of fear :  
In thicket hid I curs’d the haggard scene—  
The banquet of my arms, my arbour queen,  
Seated upon an uptorn forest root ;  
And all around her shapes, wizard and brute,  
Laughing, and wailing, groveling, serpentine,  
Showing tooth, tusk, and venom-bag, and sting !  
O such deformities ! Old Charon’s self,  
Should he give up awhile his penny pelf,  
And take a dream ’mong rushes Stygian,  
It could not be so phantasy’d. Fierce, wan,

And tyrannizing was the lady's look,  
As over them a gnarled staff she shook.  
Oft-times upon the sudden she laugh'd out,  
And from a basket empty'd to the rout  
Clusters of grapes, the which they raven'd quick  
And roar'd for more; with many a hungry lick  
About their shaggy jaws. Avenging, slow,  
Anon she took a branch of mistletoe,  
And empty'd on't a black dull-gurgling phial:  
Groan'd one and all, as if some piercing trial  
Was sharpening for their pitiable bones.  
She lifted up the charm: appealing groans  
From their poor breasts went sueing to her ear  
In vain; remorseless as an infant's bier  
She whisk'd against their eyes the sooty oil.  
Whereat was heard a noise of painful toil,  
Increasing gradual to a tempest rage,  
Shrieks, yells, and groans of torture-pilgrimage;  
Until their grieved bodies 'gan to bloat  
And puff from the tail's end to stifled throat:  
Then was appalling silence: then a sight  
More wildering than all that hoarse affright;  
For the whole herd, as by a whirlwind writhen,  
Went through the dismal air like one huge Python  
Antagonizing Boreas,—and so vanish'd.  
Yet there was not a breath of wind: she banish'd  
These phantoms with a nod. Lo! from the dark  
Came waggish fauns, and nymphs, and satyrs  
stark,  
With dancing and loud revelry,—and went  
Swifter than centaurs after rapine bent.—  
Sighing an elephant appear'd and bow'd  
Before the fierce witch, speaking thus aloud

In human accent : “ Potent goddess ! chief  
Of pains resistless ! make my being brief,  
Or let me from this heavy prison fly :  
Or give me to the air, or let me die !  
I sue not for my happy crown again ;  
I sue not for my phalanx on the plain ;  
I sue not for my lone, my widow'd wife ;  
I sue not for my ruddy drops of life,  
My children fair, my lovely girls and boys !  
I will forget them ; I will pass these joys ;  
Ask nought so heavenward, so too—too high :  
Only I pray, as fairest boon, to die,  
Or be deliver'd from this cumbrous flesh,  
From this gross, detestable, filthy mesh,  
And merely given to the cold bleak air.  
Have mercy, Goddess ! Circe, feel my prayer ! ”

‘ That curst magician’s name fell icy numb  
Upon my wild conjecturing : truth had come  
Naked and sabre-like against my heart.  
I saw a fury whetting a death-dart ;  
And my slain spirit, overwrought with fright,  
Fainted away in that dark lair of night.  
Think, my deliverer, how desolate  
My waking must have been ! disgust, and hate,  
And terrors manifold divided me  
A spoil amongst them. I prepar’d to flee  
Into the dungeon core of that wild wood :  
I fled three days—when lo ! before me stood  
Glaring the angry witch. O Dis, even now,  
A clammy dew is beading on my brow,  
At mere remembering her pale laugh, and curse.  
“ Ha ! ha ! Sir Dainty ! there must be a nurse

Made of rose leaves and thistledown, express,  
 To cradle thee my sweet, and lull thee : yes,  
 I am too flinty-hard for thy nice touch :  
 My tenderest squeeze is but a giant's clutch.  
 So, fairy-thing, it shall have lullabies  
 Unheard of yet : and it shall still its cries  
 Upon some breast more lilly-feminine.  
 Oh, no—it shall not pine, and pine, and pine  
 More than one pretty, trifling thousand years ;  
 And then 'twere pity, but fate's gentle shears  
 Cut short its immortality. Sea-flirt !  
 Young dove of the waters ! truly I'll not hurt  
 One hair of thine : see how I weep and sigh,  
 That our heart-broken parting is so nigh.  
 And must we part ? Ah, yes, it must be so.  
 Yet ere thou leavest me in utter woe,  
 Let me sob over thee my last adieus,  
 And speak a blessing : Mark me ! Thou hast  
     thews

Immortal, for thou art of heavenly race :  
 But such a love is mine, that here I chace  
 Eternally away from thee all bloom  
 Of youth, and destine thee towards a tomb.  
 Hence shalt thou quickly to the watery vast ;  
 And there, ere many days be overpast,  
 Disabled age shall seize thee ; and even then  
 Thou shalt not go the way of aged men ;  
 But live and wither, cripple and still breathe  
 Ten hundred years : which gone, I then bequeath  
 Thy fragile bones to unknown burial.  
 Adieu, sweet love, adieu ! ”—As shot stars fall,  
 She fled ere I could groan for mercy. Stung  
 And poison'd was my spirit : despair sung

A war-song of defiance 'gainst all hell.  
A hand was at my shoulder to compel  
My sullen steps ; another 'fore my eyes  
Mov'd on with pointed finger. In this guise  
Enforced, at the last by ocean's foam  
I found me ; by my fresh, my native home.  
Its tempering coolness, to my life akin,  
Came salutary as I waded in ;  
And, with a blind voluptuous rage, I gave  
Battle to the swollen billow-ridge, and drave  
Large froth before me, while there yet remain'd  
Hale strength, nor from my bones all marrow drain'd.

'Young lover, I must weep—such hellish spite  
With dry cheek who can tell? While thus my might  
Proving upon this element, dismay'd,  
Upon a dead thing's face my hand I laid ;  
I look'd—'twas Scylla ! Cursed, cursed Circe !  
O vulture-witch, hast never heard of mercy ?  
Could not thy harshest vengeance be content,  
But thou must nip this tender innocent  
Because I lov'd her?—Cold, O cold indeed  
Were her fair limbs, and like a common weed  
The sea-swell took her hair. Dead as she was  
I clung about her waist, nor ceas'd to pass  
Fleet as an arrow through unfathom'd brine,  
Until there shone a fabric crystalline,  
Ribb'd and inlaid with coral, pebble, and pearl.  
Headlong I darted ; at one eager swirl  
Gain'd its bright portal, enter'd, and behold !  
'Twas vast, and desolate, and icy-cold ;  
And all around—But wherefore this to thee  
Who in few minutes more thyself shalt see?—



I left poor Scylla in a niche and fled.  
 My fever'd parchings up, my scathing dread  
 Met palsy half way : soon these limbs became  
 Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and lame.

'Now let me pass a cruel, cruel space,  
 Without one hope, without one faintest trace  
 Of mitigation, or redeeming bubble  
 Of colour'd phantasy ; for I fear 'twould trouble  
 Thy brain to loss of reason : and next tell  
 How a restoring chance came down to quell  
 One half of the witch in me.

'On a day,

Sitting upon a rock above the spray,  
 I saw grow up from the horizon's brink  
 A gallant vessel : soon she seem'd to sink  
 Away from me again, as though her course  
 Had been resum'd in spite of hindering force—  
 So vanish'd : and not long, before arose  
 Dark clouds, and muttering of winds morose.  
 Old Æolus would stifle his mad spleen,  
 But could not : therefore all the billows green  
 Toss'd up the silver spume against the clouds.  
 The tempest came : I saw that vessel's shrouds  
 In perilous bustle ; while upon the deck  
 Stood trembling creatures. I beheld the wreck ;  
 The final gulphing ; the poor struggling souls :  
 I heard their cries amid loud thunder-rolls.  
 O they had all been sav'd but crazed eld  
 Annul'd my vigorous cravings : and thus quell'd  
 And curb'd, think on't, O Latmian ! did I sit  
 Writhing with pity, and a cursing fit



Against that hell-born Circe. The crew had gone,  
By one and one, to pale oblivion ;  
And I was gazing on the surges prone,  
With many a scalding tear and many a groan,  
When at my feet emerg'd an old man's hand,  
Grasping this scroll, and this same slender wand.  
I knelt with pain—reach'd out my hand—had grasp'd  
These treasures—touch'd the knuckles—they un-  
clasp'd—

I caught a finger : but the downward weight  
O'erpowered me—it sank. Then 'gan abate  
The storm, and through chill aguish gloom out-  
burst

The comfortable sun. I was athirst  
To search the book, and in the warming air  
Parted its dripping leaves with eager care.  
Strange matters did it treat of, and drew on  
My soul page after page, till well-nigh won  
Into forgetfulness ; when, stupefied,  
I read these words, and read again, and tried  
My eyes against the heavens, and read again.  
O what a load of misery and pain  
Each Atlas-line bore off!—a shine of hope  
Came gold around me, cheering me to cope  
Strenuous with hellish tyranny. Attend !  
For thou hast brought their promise to an end.

“ In the wide sea there lives a forlorn wretch,  
Doom'd with enfeebled carcase to outstretch  
His loath'd existence through ten centuries,  
And then to die alone. Who can devise  
A total opposition? No one. So  
One million times ocean must ebb and flow,

And he oppressed. Yet he shall not die,  
 These things accomplish'd :—If he utterly  
 Scans all the depths of magic, and expounds  
 The meanings of all motions, shapes, and sounds ;  
 If he explores all forms and substances  
 Straight homeward to their symbol-essences ;  
 He shall not die. Moreover, and in chief,  
 He must pursue this task of joy and grief  
 Most piously ;—all lovers tempest-tost,  
 And in the savage overwhelming lost,  
 He shall deposit side by side, until  
 Time's creeping shall the dreary space fulfil :  
 Which done, and all these labours ripened,  
 A youth, by heavenly power lov'd and led,  
 Shall stand before him ; whom he shall direct  
 How to consummate all. The youth elect  
 Must do the thing, or both will be destroy'd."—

'Then,' cried the young Endymion, overjoy'd,  
 'We are twin brothers in this destiny !  
 Say, I entreat thee, what achievement high  
 Is, in this restless world, for me reserv'd.  
 What ! if from thee my wandering feet had swerv'd,  
 Had we both perish'd ?'—'Look !' the sage reply'd,  
 'Dost thou not mark a gleaming through the tide,  
 Of diverse brilliances ? 'tis the edifice  
 I told thee of, where lovely Scylla lies ;  
 And where I have enshrined piously  
 All lovers, whom fell storms have doom'd to die  
 Throughout my bondage.' Thus discoursing, on  
 They went till unobscur'd the porches shone ;  
 Which hurryingly they gain'd, and enter'd straight.  
 Sure never since king Neptune held his state

Was seen such wonder underneath the stars.  
 Turn to some level plain where haughty Mars  
 Has legion'd all his battle ; and behold  
 How every soldier, with firm foot, doth hold  
 His even breast : see, many steeled squares,  
 And rigid ranks of iron—whence who dares  
 One step? Imagine further, line by line,  
 These warrior thousands on the field supine :—  
 So in that crystal place, in silent rows,  
 Poor lovers lay at rest from joys and woes.—  
 The stranger from the mountains, breathless, trac'd  
 Such thousands of shut eyes in order plac'd ;  
 Such ranges of white feet, and patient lips  
 All ruddy,—for here death no blossom nips.  
 He mark'd their brows and foreheads ; saw their  
     hair  
 Put sleekly on one side with nicest care ;  
 And each one's gentle wrists, with reverence,  
 Put cross-wise to its heart.

‘ Let us commence,’

Whisper'd the guide, stuttering with joy, ‘ even now.’  
 He spake, and, trembling like an aspen-bough,  
 Began to tear his scroll in pieces small,  
 Uttering the while some mumblings funeral.  
 He tore it into pieces small as snow  
 That drifts unfeather'd when bleak northerns blow ;  
 And having done it, took his dark blue cloak  
 And bound it round Endymion : then struck  
 His wand against the empty air times nine.—  
 ‘ What more there is to do, young man, is thine  
 But first a little patience ; first undo  
 This tangled thread, and wind it to a clue.

Ah, gentle! 'tis as weak as spider's skein;  
 And shouldst thou break it—What, is it done so clean?  
 A power overshadows thee! O, brave!  
 The spite of hell is tumbling to its grave.  
 Here is a shell; 'tis pearly blank to me,  
 Nor mark'd with any sign or character—  
 Canst thou read aught? O read for pity's sake!  
 Olympus! we are safe! Now, Carian, break  
 This wand against yon lyre on the pedestal."

'Twas done: and straight with sudden swell and  
 fall

Sweet music breath'd her soul away, and sigh'd  
 A lullaby to silence.—'Youth! now strew  
 These minced leaves on me, and passing through  
 Those files of dead, scatter the same around,  
 And thou wilt see the issue.'—'Mid the sound  
 Of flutes and viols, ravishing his heart,  
 Endymion from Glaucus stood apart,  
 And scatter'd in his face some fragments light.  
 How lightning-swift the change! a youthful wight  
 Smiling beneath a coral diadem,  
 Out-sparkling sudden like an upturn'd gem,  
 Appear'd, and, stepping to a beauteous corse,  
 Kneel'd down beside it, and with tenderest force  
 Press'd its cold hand, and wept,—and Scylla sigh'd!  
 Endymion, with quick hand, the charm apply'd—  
 The nymph arose: he left them to their joy,  
 And onward went upon his high employ,  
 Showering those powerful fragments on the dead.  
 And, as he pass'd, each lifted up his head,  
 As doth a flower at Apollo's touch.  
 Death felt it to his inwards: 'twas too much:

Death fell a weeping in his charnel-house.  
 The Latmian persever'd along, and thus  
 All were re-animated. There arose  
 A noise of harmony, pulses and throes  
 Of gladness in the air—while many, who  
 Had died in mutual arms devout and true,  
 Sprang to each other madly ; and the rest  
 Felt a high certainty of being blest.  
 They gaz'd upon Endymion. Enchantment  
 Grew drunken, and would have its head and bent.  
 Delicious symphonies, like airy flowers,  
 Budded, and swell'd, and, full-blown, shed full  
     showers  
 Of light, soft, unseen leaves of sounds divine.  
 The two deliverers tasted a pure wine  
 Of happiness, from fairy-press ooz'd out.  
 Speechless they ey'd each other, and about  
 The fair assembly wander'd to and fro,  
 Distracted with the richest overflow  
 Of joy that ever pour'd from heaven.

——' Away ! '

Shouted the new born god ; ' Follow, and pay  
 Our piety to Neptunus supreme ! '—  
 Then Scylla, blushing sweetly from her dream,  
 They led on first, bent to her meek surprise,  
 Through portal columns of a giant size,  
 Into the vaulted, boundless emerald.  
 Joyous all follow'd as the leader call'd,  
 Down marble steps ; pouring as easily  
 As hour-glass sand,—and fast, as you might see  
 Swallows obeying the south summer's call,  
 Or swans upon a gentle waterfall.



Thus went that beautiful multitude, nor far,  
Ere from among some rocks of glittering spar,  
Just within ken, they saw descending thick  
Another multitude. Whereat more quick  
Mov'd either host. On a wide sand they met,  
And of those numbers every eye was wet ;  
For each their old love found. A murmuring rose,  
Like what was never heard in all the throes  
Of wind and waters : 'tis past human wit  
To tell ; 'tis dizziness to think of it.

This mighty consummation made, the host  
Mov'd on for many a league ; and gain'd, and lost  
Huge sea-marks ; vanward swelling in array,  
And from the rear diminishing away,—  
Till a faint dawn surpris'd them. Glaucus cry'd,  
'Behold ! behold, the palace of his pride !  
God Neptune's palaces !' With noise increas'd,  
They shoulder'd on towards that brightening east.  
At every onward step proud domes arose  
In prospect,—diamond gleams, and golden glows  
Of amber 'gainst their faces levelling.  
Joyous, and many as the leaves in spring,  
Still onward ; still the splendour gradual swell'd.  
Rich opal domes were seen, on high upheld  
By jasper pillars, letting through their shafts  
A blush of coral. Copious wonder-draughts  
Each gazer drank ; and deeper drank more near :  
For what poor mortals fragment up, as mere  
As marble was there lavish, to the vast  
Of one fair palace, that far far surpass'd,  
Even for common bulk, those olden three,  
Memphis, and Babylon, and Nineveh.



As large, as bright, as colour'd as the bow  
Of Iris, when unfading it doth show  
Beyond a silvery shower, was the arch  
Through which this Paphian army took its march,  
Into the outer courts of Neptune's state :  
Whence could be seen, direct, a golden gate,  
To which the leaders sped ; but not half raught  
Ere it burst open swift as fairy thought,  
And made those dazzled thousands veil their eyes  
Like callow eagles at the first sunrise.  
Soon with an eagle nativeness their gaze  
Ripe from hue-golden swoons took all the blaze,  
And then, behold ! large Neptune on his throne  
Of emerald deep : yet not exalt alone ;  
At his right hand stood winged Love, and on  
His left sat smiling Beauty's paragon.

Far as the mariner on highest mast  
Can see all round upon the calmed vast,  
So wide was Neptune's hall : and as the blue  
Doth vault the waters, so the waters drew  
Their doming curtains, high, magnificent,  
Aw'd from the throne aloof ;—and when storm-rent  
Disclos'd the thunder-gloomings in Jove's air ;  
But sooth'd as now, flash'd sudden everywhere,  
Noiseless, sub-marine cloudlets, glittering  
Death to a human eye : for there did spring  
From natural west, and east, and south, and north,  
A light as of four sunsets, blazing forth  
A gold-green zenith 'bove the Sea-God's head.  
Of lucid depth the floor, and far outspread  
As breezeless lake, on which the slim canoe  
Of feather'd Indian darts about, as through

The delicatest air : air verily,  
 But for the portraiture of clouds and sky :  
 This palace floor breath-air,—but for the amaze  
 Of deep-seen wonders motionless,—and blaze  
 Of the dome pomp, reflected in extremes,  
 Globing a golden sphere.

They stood in dreams

Till Triton blew his horn. The palace rang ;  
 The Nereids danc'd ; the Syrens faintly sang ;  
 And the great Sea-King bow'd his dripping head.  
 Then Love took wing, and from his pinions shed  
 On all the multitude a nectarous dew.  
 The ooze-born Goddess beckoned and drew  
 Fair Scylla and her guides to conference ;  
 And when they reach'd the throned eminence  
 She kist the sea-nymph's cheek,—who sat her down  
 A toying with the doves. Then,—' Mighty crown  
 And sceptre of this kingdom !' Venus said,  
 ' Thy vows were on a time to Nais paid :  
 Behold !'— Two copious tear-drops instant fell  
 From the God's large eyes ; he smil'd delectable,  
 And over Glaucus held his blessing hands.—  
 ' Endymion ! Ah ! still wandering in the bands  
 Of love ? Now this is cruel. Since the hour  
 I met thee in earth's bosom, all my power  
 Have I put forth to serve thee. What, not yet  
 Escap'd from dull mortality's harsh net ?  
 A little patience, youth ! 'twill not be long,  
 Or I am skillless quite : an idle tongue,  
 A humid eye, and steps luxurious,  
 Where these are new and strange, are ominous.  
 Aye, I have seen these signs in one of heaven,

When others were all blind : and were I given  
 To utter secrets, haply I might say  
 Some pleasant words :—but Love will have his  
 day.

So wait awhile expectant. Pr'ythee soon,  
 Even in the passing of thine honey-moon,  
 Visit thou my Cythera : thou wilt find  
 Cupid well-natured, my Adonis kind ;  
 And pray persuade with thee—Ah, I have done,  
 All blisses be upon thee, my sweet son !'—  
 Thus the fair goddess : While Endymion  
 Knelt to receive those accents halcyon.

Meantime a glorious revelry began  
 Before the Water-Monarch. Nectar ran  
 In courteous fountains to all cups outreach'd ;  
 And plunder'd vines, teeming exhaustless, pleach'd  
 New growth about each shell and pendent lyre ;  
 The which, in disentangling for their fire,  
 Pull'd down fresh foliage and coverture  
 For dainty toying. Cupid, empire-sure,  
 Flutter'd and laugh'd, and oft-times through the  
 throng  
 Made a delighted way. Then dance, and song,  
 And garlanding grew wild ; and pleasure reign'd.  
 In harmless tendrils they each other chain'd,  
 And strove who should be smother'd deepest in  
 Fresh crush of leaves.

O 'tis a very sin

For one so weak to venture his poor verse  
 In such a place as this. O do not curse,  
 High Muses ! let him hurry to the ending.

All suddenly were silent. A soft blending  
Of dulcet instruments came charmingly ;  
And then a hymn.

‘ KING of the stormy sea !

Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor  
Of elements ! Eternally before  
Thee the waves awful bow. Fast, stubborn rock,  
At thy fear'd trident shrinking, doth unlock  
Its deep foundations, hissing into foam.  
All mountain-rivers, lost in the wide home  
Of thy capacious bosom, ever flow.  
Thou frownest, and old Æolus thy foe  
Skulks to his cavern, 'mid the gruff complaint  
Of all his rebel tempests. Dark clouds faint  
When, from thy diadem, a silver gleam  
Slants over blue dominion. Thy bright team  
Gulphs in the morning light, and scuds along  
To bring thee nearer to that golden song  
Apollo singeth, while his chariot  
Waits at the doors of heaven. Thou art not  
For scenes like this : an empire stern hast  
thou ;  
And it hath furrow'd that large front : yet now,  
As newly come of heaven, dost thou sit  
To blend and interknit  
Subdued majesty with this glad time.  
O shell-borne King sublime !  
We lay our hearts before thee evermore—  
We sing, and we adore !

‘ Breathe softly, flutes ;  
Be tender of your strings, ye soothing lutes ;

Nor be the trumpet heard ! O vain, O vain ;  
 Not flowers budding in an April rain,  
 Nor breath of sleeping dove, nor river's flow,—  
 No, nor the Æolian twang of Love's own bow,  
 Can mingle music fit for the soft ear  
 Of goddess Cytherea !  
 Yet deign, white Queen of Beauty, thy fair eyes  
 On our souls' sacrifice.

‘ Bright-winged Child !  
 Who has another care when thou hast smil'd ?  
 Unfortunates on earth, we see at last  
 All death-shadows, and glooms that overcast  
 Our spirits, fann'd away by thy light pinions.  
 O sweetest essence ! sweetest of all minions !  
 God of warm pulses, and dishevell'd hair,  
 And panting bosoms bare !  
 Dear unseen light in darkness ! eclipser  
 Of light in light ! delicious poisoner !  
 Thy venom'd goblet will we quaff until  
 We fill—we fill !  
 And by thy Mother's lips——’

Was heard no more  
 For clamour, when the golden palace door  
 Opened again, and from without, in shone  
 A new magnificence. On oozy throne  
 Smooth-moving came Oceanus the old,  
 To take a latest glimpse at his sheep-fold,  
 Before he went into his quiet cave  
 To muse for ever—Then a lucid wave,  
 Scoop'd from its trembling sisters of mid-sea,  
 Afloat, and pillowing up the majesty

Of Doris, and the Ægean seer, her spouse—  
 Next, on a dolphin, clad in laurel boughs,  
 Theban Amphion leaning on his lute :  
 His fingers went across it—All were mute  
 To gaze on Amphitrite, queen of pearls,  
 And Thetis pearly too.—

The palace whirls

Around giddy Endymion ; seeing he  
 Was there far strayed from mortality.  
 He could not bear it—shut his eyes in vain ;  
 Imagination gave a dizzier pain.  
 “ O I shall die ! sweet Venus, be my stay !  
 Where is my lovely mistress ? Well-away !  
 I die—I hear her voice—I feel my wing—’  
 At Neptune’s feet he sank. A sudden ring  
 Of Nereids were about him, in kind strife  
 To usher back his spirit into life :  
 But still he slept. At last they interwove  
 Their cradling arms, and purpos’d to convey  
 Towards a crystal bower far away.

Lo ! while slow carried through the pitying  
 crowd,  
 To his inward senses these words spake aloud ;  
 Written in star-light on the dark above :  
*Dearest Endymion ! my entire love !  
 How have I dwelt in fear of fate : ’tis done—  
 Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won.  
 Arise then ! for the hen-dove shall not hatch  
 Her ready eggs, before I’ll kissing snatch  
 Thee into endless heaven. Awake ! awake !*



The youth at once arose : a placid lake  
 Came quiet to his eyes ; and forest green,  
 Cooler than all the wonders he had seen,  
 Lull'd with its simple song his fluttering breast.  
 How happy once again in grassy nest !

Bk. III., ll. 1-1032.

### ODE TO SORROW

**O** SORROW,  
 Why dost borrow  
 The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips?—  
 To give maiden blushes  
 To the white rose bushes?  
 Or is't thy dewy hand the daisy tips?

'O Sorrow,  
 Why dost borrow  
 The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye?—  
 To give the glow-worm light?  
 Or, on a moonless night,  
 To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spry?

'O Sorrow,  
 Why dost borrow  
 The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue?—  
 To give at evening pale  
 Unto the nightingale,  
 That thou mayst listen the cold dews among?

'O Sorrow,  
 Why dost borrow  
 Heart's lightness from the merriment of May?—

A lover would not tread  
 A cowslip on the head,  
 Though he should dance from eve till peep of day—  
 Nor any drooping flower  
 Held sacred for thy bower,  
 Wherever he may sport himself and play.

' To Sorrow,  
 I bade good-morrow,  
 And thought to leave her far away behind ;  
 But cheerly, cheerly,  
 She loves me dearly ;  
 She is so constant to me, and so kind :  
 I would deceive her  
 And so leave her,  
 But ah ! she is so constant and so kind.

' Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,  
 I sat a weeping : in the whole world wide  
 There was no one to ask me why I wept,—  
 And so I kept  
 Brimming the water-lilly cups with tears  
 Cold as my fears.

' Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,  
 I sat a weeping : what enamour'd bride,  
 Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,  
 But hides and shrouds  
 Beneath dark palm trees by a river side ?

' And as I sat, over the light blue hills  
 There came a noise of revellers : the rills

Into the wide stream came of purple hue—

'Twas Bacchus and his crew !

The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills

From kissing cymbals made a merry din—

'Twas Bacchus and his kin !

Like to a moving vintage down they came,

Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame ;

All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,

To scare thee, Melancholy !

O then, O then, thou wast a simple name !

And I forgot thee, as the berried holly

By shepherds is forgotten, when, in June,

Tall chesnuts keep away the sun and moon :—

I rush'd into the folly !

' Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,

Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,

With sidelong laughing ;

And little rills of crimson wine imbru'd

His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white

For Venus' pearly bite :

And near him rode Silenus on his ass,

Pelted with flowers as he on did pass

Tipsily quaffing.

' Whence came ye, merry Damsels ! whence came ye !

So many, and so many, and such glee ?

Why have ye left your bowers desolate,

Your lutes, and gentler fate ?—

“ We follow Bacchus ! Bacchus on the wing,

A conquering !

Bacchus, young Bacchus ! good or ill betide,

We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide :—

Come hither, lady fair, and joined be  
To our wild minstrelsy !”

‘ Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs ! whence came ye !  
So many, and so many, and such glee ?  
Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left  
Your nuts in oak-tree cleft ?—  
“ For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree ;  
For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,  
And cold mushrooms ;  
For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth ;  
Great God of breathless cups and chirping mirth !—  
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be  
To our mad minstrelsy !”

‘ Over wide streams and mountains great we went,  
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,  
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,  
With Asian elephants :  
Onward these myriads—with song and dance,  
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians’ prance,  
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,  
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,  
Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil  
Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers’ toil :  
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,  
Nor care for wind and tide.

‘ Mounted on panthers’ furs and lions’ manes,  
From rear to van they scour about the plains ;  
A three days’ journey in a moment done :  
And always, at the rising of the sun,

About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,  
On spleenful unicorn.

'I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown  
Before the vine-wreath crown !  
I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing  
To the silver cymbals' ring !  
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce  
Old Tartary the fierce !  
The kings of Inde their jewel-sceptres vail,  
And from their treasures scatter pearly hail ;  
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,  
And all his priesthood moans ;  
Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.—  
Into these regions came I following him,  
Sick hearted, weary—so I took a whim  
To stray away into these forests drear  
Alone, without a peer :  
And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

'Young stranger !  
I've been a ranger  
In search of pleasure throughout every clime :  
Alas, 'tis not for me !  
Bewitch'd I sure must be,  
To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.

'Come then, Sorrow !  
Sweetest Sorrow !  
Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast :  
I thought to leave thee  
And deceive thee,  
But now of all the world I love thee best.

‘There is not one,  
 No, no, not one  
 But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid ;  
 Thou art her mother,  
 And her brother,  
 Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade.’

Bk. IV., ll. 146-290.

### HYMN TO DIANA

WHO, who from Dian’s feast would be away?  
 For all the golden bowers of the day  
 Are empty left? Who, who away would be  
 From Cynthia’s wedding and festivity?  
 Not Hesperus: lo! upon his silver wings  
 He leans away for highest heaven and sings,  
 Snapping his lucid fingers merrily!—  
 Ah, Zephyrus! art here, and Flora too!  
 Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew,  
 Young playmates of the rose and daffodil,  
 Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill  
     Your baskets high  
 With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines,  
 Savory, latter-mint, and columbines,  
 Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme;  
 Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime,  
 All gather’d in the dewy morning: hie  
     Away! fly, fly!—  
 Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven,  
 Aquarius! to whom king Jove has given  
 Two liquid pulse streams ’stead of feather’d wings,  
 Two fan-like fountains,—thine illuminings  
     For Dian play:



Dissolve the frozen purity of air ;  
Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare  
Show cold through watery pinions ; make more  
bright

The Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage night :

Haste, haste away !—

Castor has tam'd the planet Lion, see !

And of the Bear has Pollux mastery :

A third is in the race ! who is the third

Speeding away swift as the eagle bird ?

The ramping Centaur !

The Lion's mane's on end : the Bear how fierce !

The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce

Some enemy : far forth his bow is bent

Into the blue of heaven. He'll be shent

Pale unrelentor,

When he shall hear the wedding lutes a playing.—

Andromeda ! sweet woman ! why delaying

So timidly among the stars : come hither !

Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow whither

They all are going.

Danae's Son, before Jove newly bow'd,

Has wept for thee, calling to Jove aloud.

Thee, gentle lady, did he disenthral :

Ye shall for ever live and love, for all

Thy tears are flowing.—

By Daphne's fright, behold Apoilo !—'

Bk. IV., ll. 563-610.

## L A M I A

## PART I

U P O N a time, before the faery broods  
Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous  
woods,

Before king Oberon's bright diadem,  
Sceptre, and mantle, clasp'd with dewy gem,  
Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns  
From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslip'd lawns,  
The ever-smitten Hermes empty left  
His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft :  
From high Olympus had he stolen light,  
On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight  
Of his great summoner, and made retreat  
Into a forest on the shores of Crete.  
For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt  
A nymph, to whom all hooféd Satyrs knelt ;  
At whose white feet the languid Tritons poured  
Pearls, while on land they wither'd and adored.  
Fast by the springs where she to bathe was wont,  
And in those meads where sometime she might  
haunt,

Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,  
Though Fancy's casket were unlock'd to choose.  
Ah, what a world of love was at her feet !  
So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat  
Burnt from his winged heels to either ear,  
That from a whiteness, as the lilly clear,  
Blush'd into roses 'mid his golden hair,  
Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare.

From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew,  
Breathing upon the flowers his passion new,  
And wound with many a river to its head,  
To find where this sweet nymph prepar'd her secret  
bed :

In vain ; the sweet nymph might nowhere be  
found,

And so he rested, on the lonely ground,  
Pensive, and full of painful jealousies  
Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.  
There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,  
Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys  
All pain but pity : thus the lone voice spake :  
'When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake !  
When move in a sweet body fit for life,  
And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife  
Of hearts and lips ! Ah, miserable me !'  
The God, dove-footed, glided silently  
Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,  
The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,  
Until he found a palpitating snake,  
Bright, and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake.

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue,  
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue ;  
Strip'd like a zebra, freckled like a pard,  
Ey'd like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd ;  
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,  
Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or interwreathed  
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—  
So rainbow-sided, touch'd with miseries,  
She seem'd, at once, some penanc'd lady elf,  
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.

Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire  
 Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar :  
 Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet !  
 She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete :

And for her eyes : what could such eyes do there  
 But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair ?  
 As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.  
 Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake  
 Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake,  
 And thus ; while Hermes on his pinions lay,  
 Like a stoop'd falcon ere he takes his prey.

'Fair Hermes, crown'd with feathers, fluttering  
 light,

I had a splendid dream of thee last night :  
 I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold,  
 Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,  
 The only sad one ; for thou didst not hear  
 The soft, lute-finger'd Muses chaunting clear,  
 Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,  
 Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long melodious  
 moan.

I dreamt I saw thee, rob'd in purple flakes,  
 Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,  
 And, swiftly as a bright Phœbean dart,  
 Strike for the Cretan isle ; and here thou art !  
 Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid ?'  
 Whereat the star of Lethe not delay'd  
 His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired :  
 'Thou smooth-lipp'd serpent, surely high inspired !  
 Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,  
 Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,

Telling me only where my nymph is fled,—  
Where she doth breathe !' 'Bright planet, thou hast  
said,'

Return'd the snake, 'but seal with oaths, fair God !'  
'I swear,' said Hermes, 'by my serpent rod,  
And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown !'  
Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms  
blown.

Then thus again the brilliance feminine :  
'Too frail of heart ! for this lost nymph of thine,  
Free as the air, invisibly, she strays  
About these thornless wilds ; her pleasant days  
She tastes unseen ; unseen her nimble feet  
Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet ;  
From weary tendrils, and bow'd branches green,  
She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen :  
And by my power is her beauty veil'd  
To keep it unaffronted, unassail'd  
By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,  
Of Satyrs, Fauns, and blear'd Silenus' sighs.  
Pale grew her immortality, for woe  
Of all these lovers, and she grieved so  
I took compassion on her, bade her steep  
Her hair in weird syrups, that would keep  
Her loveliness invisible, yet free  
To wander as she loves, in liberty.  
Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone,  
If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon !'  
Then, once again, the charmed God began  
An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran  
Warm, tremulous, devout. psalterian.  
Ravish'd, she lifted her Circean head,  
Blush'd a live damask, and swift-lisping said,

'I was a woman, let me have once more  
 A woman's shape, and charming as before.  
 I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss!  
 Give me my woman's form, and place me where he is.  
 Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,  
 And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now.'  
 The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,  
 She breath'd upon his eyes, and swift was seen  
 Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the  
 green.

It was no dream; or say a dream it was,  
 Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass  
 Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.  
 One warm, flush'd moment, hovering, it might seem  
 Dash'd by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he burn'd;  
 Then, lighting on the printless verdure, turn'd  
 To the swoon'd serpent, and with languid arm,  
 Delicate, put to proof the lythe Caducean charm.  
 So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent  
 Full of adoring tears and blandishment,  
 And towards her stept: she, like a moon in wane,  
 Faded before him, cower'd, nor could restrain  
 Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower  
 That faints into itself at evening hour:  
 But the God fostering her chill'd hand,  
 She felt the warmth, her eyelids open'd bland,  
 And, like new flowers at morning song of bees,  
 Bloom'd, and gave up her honey to the lees.  
 Into the green-recessed woods they flew;  
 Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began  
 To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,



Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent,  
Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent ;  
Her eyes in torture fix'd, and anguish drear,  
Hot, glaz'd, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,  
Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks, without one  
cooling tear.

The colours all inflam'd throughout her train,  
She writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain :  
A deep volcanian yellow took the place  
Of all her milder-moonéd body's grace ;  
And, as the lava ravishes the mead,  
Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede ;  
Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,  
Eclips'd her crescents, and lick'd up her stars :  
So that, in moments few, she was undrest  
Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,  
And rubious argent : of all these bereft,  
Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.  
Still shone her crown ; that vanish'd, also she  
Melted and disappear'd as suddenly ;  
And in the air, her new voice luting soft,  
Cry'd, ' Lycius ! gentle Lycius ! '—Borne aloft  
With the bright mists about the mountains hoar  
These words dissolv'd : Crete's forests heard no more.

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright,  
A full-born beauty new and exquisite ?  
She fled into that valley they pass o'er  
Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas' shore ;  
And rested at the foot of those wild hills,  
The rugged founts of the Peræan rills,  
And of that other ridge whose barren back  
Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,

South-westward to Cleone. There she stood  
About a young bird's flutter from a wood,  
Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,  
By a clear pool, wherein she passioned  
To see herself escap'd from so sore ills,  
While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

Ah, happy Lycius!—for she was a maid  
More beautiful than ever twisted braid,  
Or sigh'd, or blush'd, or on spring-flowered lea  
Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy :  
A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore  
Of love deep learned to the red heart's core :  
Not one hour old, yet of sciential brain  
To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain ;  
Define their pettish limits, and estrange ;  
Their points of contact, and swift counterchange ;  
Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart  
Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art ;  
As though in Cupid's college she had spent  
Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,  
And kept his rosy terms in idle languishment.

Why this fair creature chose so faerily  
By the wayside to linger, we shall see ;  
But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse  
And dream, when in the serpent prison-house,  
Of all she list, strange or magnificent :  
How, ever, where she will'd, her spirit went ;  
Whether to faint Elysium, or where  
Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids fair  
Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair ;



'While her roses blighted with the daffodils'

LAMIA



Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,  
Stretch'd out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine ;  
Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine  
Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line.  
And sometimes into cities she would send  
Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend ;  
And once, while among mortals dreaming thus,  
She saw the young Corinthian Lycius  
Charioting foremost in the envious race,  
Like a young Jove with calm uneager face,  
And fell into a swooning love of him.  
Now on the moth-time of that evening dim  
He would return that way, as well she knew,  
To Corinth from the shore ; for freshly blew  
The eastern soft wind, and his galley now  
Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow  
In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle  
Fresh anchor'd ; whither he had been awhile  
To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there  
Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense  
rare.

Jove heard his vows, and better'd his desire ;  
For by some freakful chance he made retire  
From his companions, and set forth to walk,  
Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk :  
Over the solitary hills he fared,  
Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared  
His phantasy was lost, where reason fades,  
In the calm'd twilight of Platonic shades.  
Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near—  
Close to her passing, in indifference drear,  
His silent sandals swept the mossy green ;  
So neighbour'd to him, and yet so unseen

She stood : he pass'd, shut up in mysteries,  
 His mind wrapp'd like his mantle, while her eyes  
 Follow'd his steps, and her neck regal white  
 Turn'd—syllabing thus, 'Ah, Lycius, bright,  
 And will you leave me on the hills alone?  
 Lycius, look back ! and be some pity shown.'  
 He did ; not with cold wonder fearingly,  
 But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice ;  
 For so delicious were the words she sung,  
 It seem'd he had lov'd them a whole summer long :  
 And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,  
 Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,  
 And still the cup was full,—while he, afraid  
 Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid  
 Due adoration, thus began to adore ;  
 Her soft look growing coy, she saw his chain so  
 sure :

'Leave thee alone ! Look back ! Ah, Goddess, see  
 Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee !  
 For pity do not this sad heart belie—  
 Even as thou vanishest so shall I die.  
 Stay ! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay !  
 To thy far wishes will thy streams obey :  
 Stay ! though the greenest woods be thy domain,  
 Alone they can drink up the morning rain :  
 Though a descended Pleiad, will not one  
 Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune  
 Thy spheres, and as thy silver proxy shine ?  
 So sweetly to these ravish'd ears of mine  
 Came thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst fade,  
 Thy memory will waste me to a shade :—  
 For pity do not melt !'—'If I should stay,'  
 Said Lamia, 'here, upon this floor of clay,



And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough,  
What canst thou say or do of charm enough  
To dull the nice remembrance of my home?  
Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam  
Over these hills and vales, where no joy is,—  
Empty of immortality and bliss!  
Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know  
That finer spirits cannot breathe below  
In human climes, and live: Alas! poor youth,  
What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe  
My essence? What serener palaces,  
Where I may all my many senses please,  
And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts appease?  
It cannot be—Adieu!’ So said, she rose  
Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose  
The amorous promise of her lone complain,  
Swoon’d, murmuring of love, and pale with pain.  
The cruel lady, without any show  
Of sorrow for her tender favourite’s woe,  
But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,  
With brighter eyes and slow amenity,  
Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh  
The life she had so tangled in her mesh:  
And as he from one trance was wakening  
Into another, she began to sing,  
Happy in beauty, life, and love, and every thing,  
A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres,  
While, like held breath, the stars drew in their panting  
fires.

And then she whisper’d in such trembling tone,  
As those who, safe together met alone  
For the first time through many anguish’d days,  
Use other speech than looks; bidding him raise

His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt,  
For that she was a woman, and without  
Any more subtle fluid in her veins  
Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same  
pains

Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his.  
And next she wonder'd how his eyes could miss  
Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,  
She dwelt but half retir'd, and there had led  
Days happy as the gold coin could invent  
Without the aid of love ; yet in content  
Till she saw him, as once she pass'd him by,  
Where 'gainst a column he leant thoughtfully  
At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heap'd  
Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reap'd  
Late on that eve, as 'twas the night before  
The Adonian feast ; whereof she saw no more,  
But wept alone those days, for why should she  
adore ?

Lycius from death awoke into amaze,  
To see her still, and singing so sweet lays ;  
'Then from amaze into delight he fell  
To hear her whisper woman's lore so well ;  
And every word she spake entic'd him on  
To unperplex'd delight and pleasure known.  
Let the mad poets say whate'er they please  
Of the sweets of Faeries, Peris, Goddesses,  
There is not such a treat among them all,  
Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,  
As a real woman, lineal indeed  
From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed.  
Thus gentle Lamia judg'd, and judg'd aright,  
That Lycius could not love in half a fright,

So threw the goddess off, and won his heart  
More pleasantly by playing woman's part,  
With no more awe than what her beauty gave,  
That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.  
Lycius to all made eloquent reply,  
Marrying to every word a twinborn sigh ;  
And last, pointing to Corinth, ask'd her sweet,  
If 'twas too far that night for her soft feet.  
The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness  
Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease  
To a few paces ; not at all surmised  
By blinded Lycius, so in her comprized.  
They pass'd the city gates, he knew not how,  
So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,  
Throughout her palaces imperial,  
And all her populous streets and temples lewd,  
Mutter'd, like tempest in the distance brew'd,  
To the wide-spreaded night above her towers.  
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,  
Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,  
Companion'd or alone ; while many a light  
Flar'd, here and there, from wealthy festivals,  
And threw their moving shadows on the walls,  
Or found them cluster'd in the cornic'd shade  
Of some arch'd temple door, or dusky colonnade.

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,  
Her fingers he press'd hard, as one came near  
With curl'd gray beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald  
crown,  
Slow-stepp'd, and rob'd in philosophic gown :

Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past,  
 Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,  
 While hurried Lamia trembled : ' Ah,' said he,  
 ' Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully ?  
 Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew ?'—  
 ' I'm wearied,' said fair Lamia : ' tell me who  
 Is that old man ? I cannot bring to mind  
 His features :—Lycius ! wherefore did you blind  
 Yourself from his quick eyes ?' Lycius reply'd,  
 ' 'Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide  
 And good instructor ; but to-night he seems  
 The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams.'

While yet he spake they had arriv'd before  
 A pillar'd porch, with lofty portal door,  
 Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow  
 Reflected in the slabbed steps below,  
 Mild as a star in water ; for so new,  
 And so unsully'd was the marble's hue,  
 So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,  
 Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine  
 Could e'er have touch'd there. Sounds Æolian  
 Breath'd from the hinges, as the ample span  
 Of the wide doors disclos'd a place unknown  
 Some time to any, but those two alone,  
 And a few Persian mutes, who that same year  
 Were seen about the markets : none knew where  
 They could inhabit ; the most curious  
 Were foil'd, who watch'd to trace them to their house :  
 And but the flitter-winged verse must tell,  
 For truth's sake, what woe afterwards befel,  
 'Twould humour many a heart to leave them thus,  
 Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.

## PART II

LOVE in a hut, with water and a crust,  
Is—Love, forgive us !—cinders, ashes, dust ;  
Love in a palace is perhaps at last  
More grievous torment than a hermit's fast :—  
That is a doubtful tale from faery land,  
Hard for the non-elect to understand.  
Had Lycius liv'd to hand his story down,  
He might have given the moral a fresh frown,  
Or clench'd it quite : but too short was their bliss  
To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice  
    hiss.

Besides, there, nightly, with terrific glare,  
Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair,  
Hover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roar,  
Above the lintel of their chamber door,  
And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

For all this came a ruin : side by side  
They were enthroned, in the even tide,  
Upon a couch, near to a curtaining  
Whose airy texture, from a golden string,  
Floated into the room, and let appear  
Unveil'd the summer heaven, blue and clear,  
Betwixt two marble shafts :—there they reposed,  
Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed,  
Saving a tythe which love still open kept,  
That they might see each other while they almost  
    slept ;  
When from the slope side of a suburb hill,  
Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill



Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled,  
 But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.  
 For the first time, since first he harbour'd in  
 That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,  
 His spirit pass'd beyond its golden bourn  
 Into the noisy world almost forsworn.  
 The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,  
 Saw this with pain, so arguing a want  
 Of something more, more than her empery  
 Of joys ; and she began to moan and sigh  
 Because he mus'd beyond her, knowing well  
 That but a moment's thought is passion's passing  
 bell.

'Why do you sigh, fair creature?' whisper'd he :  
 'Why do you think?' return'd she tenderly :  
 'You have deserted me ;—where am I now ?  
 Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow :  
 No, no, you have dismiss'd me ; and I go  
 From your breast houseless : aye, it must be so.'  
 He answer'd, bending to her open eyes,  
 Where he was mirror'd small in paradise,  
 'My silver planet, both of eve and morn !  
 Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,  
 While I am striving how to fill my heart  
 With deeper crimson, and a double smart ?  
 How to entangle, trammel up and snare  
 Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there  
 Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose ?  
 Aye, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty woes.  
 My thoughts ! shall I unveil them ? Listen then !  
 What mortal hath a prize, that other men  
 May be confounded and abash'd withal,  
 But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestic,



And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice  
Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice.  
Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,  
While through the thronged streets your bridal car  
Wheels round its dazzling spokes.'—The lady's cheek  
Trembled; she nothing said, but, pale and meek,  
Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain  
Of sorrows at his words; at last with pain  
Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,  
To change his purpose. He thereat was stung,  
Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim  
Her wild and timid nature to his aim:  
Besides, for all his love, in self despite,  
Against his better self, he took delight  
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.  
His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue  
Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible  
In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.  
Fine was the mitigated fury, like  
Apollo's presence when in act to strike  
The serpent—Ha, the serpent! certes, she  
Was none. She burnt, she lov'd the tyranny,  
And, all subdu'd, consented to the hour  
When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.  
Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,  
'Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my  
truth,  
I have not ask'd it, ever thinking thee  
Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,  
As still I do. Hast any mortal name,  
Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?  
Or friends or kinsfolk on the cited earth,  
To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?'

'I have no friends,' said Lamia, 'no, not one ;  
 My presence in wide Corinth hardly known :  
 My parents' bones are in their dusty urns  
 Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,  
 Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,  
 And I neglect the holy rite for thee.  
 Even as you list invite your many guests ;  
 But if, as now it seems, your vision rests  
 With any pleasure on me, do not bid  
 Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid.'  
 Lycius, perplex'd at words so blind and blank,  
 Made close inquiry ; from whose touch she  
     shrank,  
 Feigning a sleep ; and he to the dull shade  
 Of deep sleep in a moment was betray'd.

It was the custom then to bring away  
 The bride from home at blushing shut of day,  
 Veil'd, in a chariot, heralded along  
 By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song,  
 With other pageants : but this fair unknown  
 Had not a friend. So being left alone  
 (Lycius was gone to summon all his kin),  
 And knowing surely she could never win  
 His foolish heart from its mad pompousness,  
 She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress  
 The misery in fit magnificence.  
 She did so, but 'tis doubtful how and whence  
 Came, and who were her subtle servitors.  
 About the halls, and to and from the doors,  
 There was a noise of wings, till in short space  
 The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched  
     grace.

A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone  
Supportress of the faery-roof, made moan  
Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.  
Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade  
Of palm and plantain, met from either side,  
High in the midst, in honor of the bride :  
Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,  
From either side their stems branch'd one to one  
All down the aisled place ; and beneath all  
There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to  
wall.

So canopy'd, lay an untasted feast  
Teeming with odours. Lamia, regal drest,  
Silently pac'd about, and as she went,  
In pale contented sort of discontent,  
Mission'd her viewless servants to enrich  
The fretted splendour of each nook and niche.  
Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first,  
Came jasper pannels ; then, anon, there burst  
Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees,  
And with the larger wove in small intricacies.  
Approving all, she faded at self-will,  
And shut the chamber up, close, hush'd and still,  
Complete and ready for the revels rude,  
When dreadful guests would come to spoil her soli-  
tude.

The day appear'd, and all the gossip rout.  
O senseless Lycius ! Madman ! wherefore flout  
The silent-blessing fate, warm cloister'd hours,  
And show to common eyes these secret bowers ?  
The herd approach'd ; each guest, with busy brain,  
Arriving at the portal, gaz'd amain,

And enter'd marveling : for they knew the street,  
Remember'd it from childhood all complete  
Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen  
That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne ;  
So in they hurried all, maz'd, curious and keen :  
Save one, who look'd thereon with eye severe,  
And with calm-planted steps walk'd in austere ;  
'Twas Apollonius : something too he laugh'd,  
As though some knotty problem, that had daft  
His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,  
And solve and melt :—'twas just as he foresaw

He met within the murmurous vestibule  
His young disciple. ' 'Tis no common rule,  
Lycius,' said he, 'for uninvited guest  
To force himself upon you, and infest  
With an unbidden presence the bright throng  
Of younger friends ; yet must I do this wrong,  
And you forgive me.' Lycius blush'd, and led  
The old man through the inner doors broad-spread ;  
With reconciling words and courteous mien  
Turning into sweet milk the sophist's spleen.

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room,  
Fill'd with pervading brilliance and perfume :  
Before each lucid pannel fuming stood  
A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood,  
Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,  
Whose slender feet wide-swerv'd upon the soft  
Wool-woofed carpets : fifty wreaths of smoke  
From fifty censers their light voyage took  
To the high roof, still mimick'd as they rose  
Along the mirror'd walls by twin-clouds odorous.

Twelve sphered tables, by silk seats inspher'd,  
High as the level of a man's breast rear'd  
On libbard's paws, upheld the heavy gold  
Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told  
Of Ceres' horn, and, in huge vessels, wine  
Come from the gloomy tun with merry shine.  
Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,  
Each shrining in the midst the image of a God.

When in an antichamber every guest  
Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure press'd,  
By minist'ring slaves, upon his hands and feet,  
And fragrant oils with ceremony meet  
Pour'd on his hair, they all mov'd to the feast  
In white robes, and themselves in order plac'd  
Around the silken couches, wondering  
Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth  
could spring.

Soft went the music the soft air along,  
While fluent Greek a vowel'd undersong  
Kept up among the guests, discoursing low  
At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow ;  
But when the happy vintage touch'd their brains,  
Louder they talk, and louder come the strains  
Of powerful instruments :—the gorgeous dyes,  
The space, the splendour of the draperies,  
The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,  
Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear,  
Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,  
And every soul from human trammels freed,  
No more so strange ; for merry wine, sweet wine,  
Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.



Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height ;  
 Flush'd were their cheeks, and bright eyes double  
 bright :

Garlands of every green, and every scent  
 From vales deflower'd, or forest-trees branch-rent,  
 In baskets of bright osier'd gold were brought  
 High as the handles heap'd, to suit the thought  
 Of every guest ; that each, as he did please,  
 Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillow'd at his ease.

What wreath for Lamia ? What for Lycius ?  
 What for the sage, old Apollonius ?  
 Upon her aching forehead be there hung  
 The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue ;  
 And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him  
 The thyrsus, that his watching eyes may swim  
 Into forgetfulness ; and, for the sage,  
 Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage  
 War on his temples. Do not all charms fly  
 At the mere touch of cold philosophy ?  
 There was an awful rainbow once in heaven :  
 We know her woof, her texture ; she is given  
 In the dull catalogue of common things.  
 Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,  
 Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,  
 Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—  
 Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made  
 The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade.

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place,  
 Scarce saw in all the room another face,  
 Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took  
 Full brimm'd, and opposite sent forth a look



'Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance  
From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,  
And pledge him. The bald-head philosopher  
Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or stir,  
Full on the alarm'd beauty of the bride,  
Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet  
pride.

Lycius then press'd her hand, with devout touch,  
As pale it lay upon the rosy couch :

'Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins ;  
Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains  
Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.

'Lamia, what means this? Wherefore dost thou  
start?

Know'st thou that man?' Poor Lamia answer'd  
not.

He gaz'd into her eyes, and not a jot  
Own'd they the lovelorn piteous appeal :  
More, more he gaz'd : his human senses reel :  
Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs ;  
There was no recognition in those orbs.

'Lamia!' he cry'd—and no soft-ton'd reply.

The many heard, and the loud revelry  
Grew hush ; the stately music no more breathes ;  
The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths.  
By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased ;  
A deadly silence step by step increased,  
Until it seem'd a horrid presence there,  
And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.

'Lamia!' he shriek'd ; and nothing but the shriek  
With its sad echo did the silence break.

'Begone, foul dream!' he cry'd, gazing again  
In the bride's face, where now no azure vein

Wander'd on fair-spac'd temples ; no soft bloom  
 Misted the cheek ; no passion to illumine  
 The deep-recess'd vision :—all was blight ;  
 Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.  
 ' Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless man !  
 Turn them aside, wretch ! or the righteous ban  
 Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images  
 Here represent their shadowy presences,  
 May pierce them on the sudden with the thorn  
 Of painful blindness ; leaving thee forlorn,  
 In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright  
 Of conscience, for their long offended might,  
 For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries,  
 Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.  
 Corinthians ! look upon that grey-beard wretch !  
 Mark how, possess'd, his lashless eyelids stretch  
 Around his demon eyes ! Corinthians, see !  
 My sweet bride withers at their potency.'  
 ' Fool !' said the sophist, in an under-tone  
 Gruff with contempt ; which a death-nighing moan  
 From Lycius answer'd, as heart-struck and lost,  
 He sank supine beside the aching ghost.  
 ' Fool ! Fool !' repeated he, while his eyes still  
 Relented not, nor mov'd ; ' from every ill  
 Of life have I preserv'd thee to this day,  
 And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey ?'  
 Then Lamia breath'd death breath ; the sophist's  
     eye,  
 Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,  
 Keen, cruel, perçant, stinging : she, as well  
 As her weak hand could any meaning tell,  
 Motion'd him to be silent ; vainly so,  
 He look'd and look'd again a level—No !

‘A serpent!’ echoed he ; no sooner said,  
 Than with a frightful scream she vanished :  
 And Lycius’ arms were empty of delight,  
 As were his limbs of life, from that same night.  
 On the high couch he lay !—his friends came round—  
 Supported him—no pulse, or breath they found,  
 And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.

ISABELLA ; OR, THE POT OF BASIL

F AIR Isabel, poor simple Isabel !  
 Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love’s eye !  
 They could not in the self-same mansion dwell  
 Without some stir of heart, some malady ;  
 They could not sit at meals but feel how well  
 It soothéd each to be the other by ;  
 They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep  
 But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

With every morn their love grew tenderer,  
 With every eve deeper and tenderer still ;  
 He might not in house, field, or garden stir,  
 But her full shape would all his seeing fill ;  
 And his continual voice was pleasanter  
 To her, than noise of trees or hidden rill ;  
 Her lute-string gave an echo of his name,  
 She spoilt her half-done broidery with the same.

He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch  
 Before the door had given her to his eyes ;  
 And from her chamber-window he would catch  
 Her beauty farther than the falcon spies ;

And constant as her vespers would he watch,  
 Because her face was turn'd to the same skies ;  
 And with sick longing all the night outwear,  
 To hear her morning-step upon the stair.

A whole long month of May in this sad plight  
 Made their cheeks paler by the break of June :  
 'To-morrow will I bow to my delight,  
 To-morrow will I ask my lady's boon.'—  
 'O may I never see another night,  
 Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love's tune.'—  
 So spake they to their pillows ; but, alas,  
 Honeyless days and days did he let pass ;

Until sweet Isabella's untouch'd cheek  
 Fell sick within the rose's just domain,  
 Fell thin as a young mother's, who doth seek  
 By every lull to cool her infant's pain :  
 'How ill she is,' said he, 'I may not speak,  
 And yet I will, and tell my love all plain :  
 If looks speak love-laws, I will drink her tears,  
 And at the least 'twill startle off her cares.'

So said he one fair morning, and all day  
 His heart beat awfully against his side ;  
 And to his heart he inwardly did pray  
 For power to speak ; but still the ruddy tide  
 Stifled his voice, and puls'd resolve away—  
 Fever'd his high conceit of such a bride,  
 Yet brought him to the meekness of a child :  
 Alas ! when passion is both meek and wild !

So once more he had wak'd and anguished  
 A dreary night of love and misery,

If Isabel's quick eye had not been wed  
 To every symbol on his forehead high ;  
 She saw it waxing very pale and dead,  
 And straight all flush'd ; so, lisped tenderly,  
 'Lorenzo !'—here she ceas'd her timid quest,  
 But in her tone and look he read the rest.

' O Isabella, I can half perceive  
 That I may speak my grief into thine ear ;  
 If thou didst ever anything believe,  
 Believe how I love thee, believe how near  
 My soul is to its doom : I would not grieve  
 Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, would not fear  
 Thine eyes by gazing ; but I cannot live  
 Another night, and not my passion shrive.

' Love ! thou art leading me from wintry cold,  
 Lady ! thou ledest me to summer clime,  
 And I must taste the blossoms that unfold  
 In its ripe warmth this gracious morning time.'  
 So said, his erewhile timid lips grew bold,  
 And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme :  
 Great bliss was with them, and great happiness  
 Grew, like a lusty flower in June's caress.

Parting they seem'd to tread upon the air,  
 Twin roses by the zephyr blown apart  
 Only to meet again more close, and share  
 The inward fragrance of each other's heart.  
 She, to her chamber gone, a ditty fair  
 Sang, of delicious love and honey'd dart ;  
 He with light steps went up a western hill,  
 And bade the sun farewell, and joy'd his fill.

All close they met again, before the dusk  
 Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,  
 All close they met, all eves, before the dusk  
 Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,  
 Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk,  
 Unknown of any, free from whispering tale.  
 Ah! better had it been for ever so,  
 Than idle ears should pleasure in their woe.

Were they unhappy then?—It cannot be—  
 Too many tears for lovers have been shed,  
 Too many sighs give we to them in fee,  
 Too much of pity after they are dead,  
 Too many doleful stories do we see,  
 Whose matter in bright gold were best be read;  
 Except in such a page where Theseus' spouse  
 Over the pathless waves towards him bows.

But, for the general award of love,  
 The little sweet doth kill much bitterness;  
 Though Dido silent is in under-grove,  
 And Isabella's was a great distress,  
 Though young Lorenzo in warm Indian clove  
 Was not embalm'd, this truth is not the less—  
 Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers,  
 Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers.

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt,  
 Enrichéd from ancestral merchandize,  
 And for them many a weary hand did swelt  
 In torchéd mines and noisy factories,  
 And many once proud quiver'd loins did melt  
 In blood from stinging whip;—with hollow eyes



Many all day in dazzling river stood,  
To take the rich-or'd driftings of the flood.

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath,  
And went all naked to the hungry shark ;  
For them his ears gush'd blood ; for them in death  
The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark  
Lay full of darts ; for them alone did see the  
A thousand men in troubles wide and dark :  
Half-ignorant, they turn'd an easy wheel,  
That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel.

Why were they proud ? Because their marble founts  
Gush'd with more pride than do a wretch's tears ?—  
Why were they proud ? Because fair orange-mounts  
Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs ?—  
Why were they proud ? Because red-lin'd accounts  
Were richer than the songs of Grecian years ?—  
Why were they proud ? again we ask aloud,  
Why in the name of Glory were they proud ?

Yet were these Florentines as self-retired  
In hungry pride and gainful cowardice,  
As two close Hebrews in that land inspired,  
Pal'd in and vineyarded from beggar-spies ;  
The hawks of ship-mast forests—the untired  
And pannier'd mules for ducats and old lies—  
Quick cat's-paws on the generous stray-away,—  
Great wits in Spanish, Tuscan, and Malay.

How was it these same ledger-men could spy  
Fair Isabella in her downy nest ?  
How could they find out in Lorenzo's eye  
A straying from his toil ? Hot Egypt's pest

Into their vision covetous and sly !

How could these money-bags see east and west?—  
Yet so they did—and every dealer fair  
Must see behind, as doth the hunted hare.

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio !

Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon,  
And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow,  
And of thy roses amorous of the moon,  
And of thy lillies, that do paler grow

Now they can no more hear thy ghittern's tune,  
For venturing syllables that ill beseem  
The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme.

Grant thou a pardon here, and then the tale

Shall move on soberly, as it is meet ;  
There is no other crime, no mad assail

To make old prose in modern rhyme more sweet :  
But it is done—succeed the verse or fail—

To honour thee, and thy gone spirit greet ;  
To stead thee as a verse in English tongue,  
An echo of thee in the north-wind sung.

These brethren having found by many signs

What love Lorenzo for their sister had,  
And how she lov'd him too, each unconfines  
His bitter thoughts to other, well nigh mad  
That he, the servant of their trade designs,

Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad,  
When 'twas their plan to coax her by degrees  
To some high noble and his olive-trees.

And many a jealous conference had they,

And many times they bit their lips alone,

Before they fix'd upon a surest way  
To make the youngster for his crime atone ;  
And at the last, these men of cruel clay  
Cut Mercy with a sharp knife to the bone ;  
For they resolv'd in some forest dim  
To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him.

So on a pleasant morning, as he leant  
Into the sun-rise, o'er the balustrade  
Of the garden-terrace, towards him they bent  
Their footing through the dews ; and to him said,  
' You seem there in the quiet of content,  
Lorenzo, and we are most loth to invade  
Calm speculation ; but if you are wise,  
Bestride your steed while cold is in the skies.

' To-day we purpose, aye, this hour we mount  
To spur three leagues towards the Apennine ;  
Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun count  
His dewy rosary on the eglantine.'  
Lorenzo, courteously as he was wont,  
Bow'd a fair greeting to these serpents' whine ;  
And went in haste, to get in readiness,  
With belt, and spur, and bracing huntsman's dress.

And as he to the court-yard pass'd along,  
Each third step did he pause, and listen'd oft  
If he could hear his lady's matin-song,  
Or the light whisper of her footstep soft ;  
And as he thus over his passion hung,  
He heard a laugh full musical aloft ;  
When, looking up, he saw her features bright  
Smile through an in-door lattice, all delight.

'Love, Isabel!' said he, 'I was in pain  
 Lest I should miss to bid thee a good morrow :  
 Ah! what if I should lose thee, when so fain  
 I am to stifle all the heavy sorrow  
 Of a poor three hours' absence? but we'll gain  
 Out of the amorous dark what day doth borrow.  
 Good bye! I'll soon be back.'—'Good bye!' said  
 she :—  
 And as he went she chanted merrily.

So the two brothers and their murder'd man  
 Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno's stream  
 Gurgles through straiten'd banks, and still doth fan  
 Itself with dancing bulrush, and the bream  
 Keeps head against the freshets. Sick and wan  
 The brothers' faces in the ford did seem,  
 Lorenzo's flush with love.—They pass'd the water  
 Into a forest quiet for the slaughter.

There was Lorenzo slain and buried in,  
 There in that forest did his great love cease ;  
 Ah! when a soul doth thus its freedom win,  
 It aches in loneliness—is ill at peace  
 As the break-covert blood-hounds of such sin :  
 They dipp'd their swords in the water, and did tease  
 Their horses homeward, with convulsed spur,  
 Each richer by his being a murderer.

They told their sister how, with sudden speed,  
 Lorenzo had ta'en ship for foreign lands,  
 Because of some great urgency and need  
 In their affairs, requiring trusty hands.

Poor Girl! put on thy stifling widow's weed,  
And 'scape at once from Hope's accursed bands;  
To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow,  
And the next day will be a day of sorrow.

She weeps alone for pleasures not to be;  
Sorely she wept until the night came on,  
And then, instead of love, O misery!  
She brooded o'er the luxury alone:  
His image in the dusk she seem'd to see,  
And to the silence made a gentle moan,  
Spreading her perfect arms upon the air,  
And on her couch low murmuring 'Where? O  
where?'

But Selfishness, Love's cousin, held not long  
Its fiery vigil in her single breast;  
She fretted for the golden hour, and hung  
Upon the time with feverish unrest—  
Not long—for soon into her heart a throng  
Of higher occupants, a richer zest,  
Came tragic; passion not to be subdu'd,  
And sorrow for her love in travels rude.

In the mid days of autumn, on their eves  
The breath of Winter comes from far away,  
And the sick west continually bereaves  
Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay  
Of death among the bushes and the leaves,  
To make all bare before he dares to stray  
From his north cavern. So sweet Isabel  
By gradual decay from beauty fell,

Because Lorenzo came not. Oftentimes  
 She ask'd her brothers, with an eye all pale,  
 Striving to be itself, what dungeon climes  
 Could keep him off so long? They spake a tale  
 Time after time, to quiet her. Their crimes  
 Came on them, like a smoke from Hinnom's vale;  
 And every night in dreams they groan'd aloud,  
 To see their sister in her snowy shroud.

And she had died in drowsy ignorance,  
 But for a thing more deadly dark than all;  
 It came like a fierce potion, drunk by chance,  
 Which saves a sick man from the feather'd pall  
 For some few gasping moments; like a lance,  
 Waking an Indian from his cloudy hall  
 With cruel pierce, and bringing him again  
 Sense of the gnawing fire at heart and brain.

It was a vision.—In the drowsy gloom,  
 The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot  
 Lorenzo stood, and wept: the forest tomb  
 Had marr'd his glossy hair which once could shoot  
 Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom  
 Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute  
 From his lorn voice, and past his loamed ears  
 Had made a miry channel for his tears.

Strange sound it was, when the pale shadow spake;  
 For there was striving, in its piteous tongue,  
 To speak as when on earth it was awake,  
 And Isabella on its music hung:  
 Languor there was in it, and tremulous shake,  
 As in a palsied Druid's harp unstrung;



And through it moan'd a ghostly under-song,  
Like hoarse night-gusts sepulchral briars among.

Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright  
With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof  
From the poor girl by magic of their light,  
The while it did unthread the horrid woof  
Of the late darken'd time,—the murderous spite  
Of pride and avarice,—the dark pine roof  
In the forest,—and the sodden turfed dell,  
Where, without any word, from stabs he fell.

Saying moreover, ' Isabel, my sweet !  
Red whortle-berries droop above my head,  
And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet ;  
Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed  
Their leaves and prickly nuts ; a sheep-fold bleat  
Comes from beyond the river to my bed :  
Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,  
And it shall comfort me within the tomb.

' I am a shadow now, alas ! alas !  
Upon the skirts of human-nature dwelling  
Alone : I chant alone the holy mass,  
While little sounds of life are round me knelling,  
And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,  
And many a chapel bell the hour is telling,  
Paining me through : those sounds grow strange to  
me,  
And thou art distant in Humanity.

' I know what was, I feel full well what is,  
And I should rage, if spirits could go mad ;

Though I forget the taste of earthly bliss,  
 That paleness warms my grave, as though I had  
 A Seraph chosen from the bright abyss  
 To be my spouse : thy paleness makes me glad ;  
 Thy beauty grows upon me, and I feel  
 A greater love through all my essence steal.'

The Spirit mourn'd ' Adieu ! '—dissolv'd and left  
 The atom darkness in a slow turmoil ;  
 As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,  
 Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil,  
 We put our eyes into a pillowy cleft,  
 And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil :  
 It made sad Isabella's eyelids ache,  
 And in the dawn she started up awake ;

' Ha ! ha ! ' said she, ' I knew not this hard life,  
 I thought the worst was simple misery ;  
 I thought some Fate with pleasure or with strife  
 Portion'd us—happy days, or else to die ;  
 But there is crime—a brother's bloody knife !  
 Sweet Spirit, thou hast school'd my infancy :  
 I'll visit thee for this, and kiss thine eyes,  
 And greet thee morn and even in the skies.'

When the full morning came, she had devised  
 How she might secret to the forest hie ;  
 How she might find the clay, so dearly prized,  
 And sing to it one latest lullaby ;  
 How her short absence might be unsurmised,  
 While she the inmost of the dream would try.  
 Resolv'd, she took with her an aged nurse,  
 And went into that dismal forest-hearse.

See, as they creep along the river side,  
How she doth whisper to that aged Dame,  
And, after looking round the champaign wide,  
Shows her a knife.—‘What feverous hectic flame  
Burns in thee, child?—What good can thee betide,  
That thou should’st smile again?’—The evening  
came,  
And they had found Lorenzo’s earthy bed ;  
The flint was there, the berries at his head.

Who hath not loiter’d in a green church-yard,  
And let his spirit, like a demon-mole,  
Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard,  
To see scull, coffin’d bones, and funeral stole ;  
Pitying each form that hungry Death hath marr’d,  
And filling it once more with human soul ?  
Ah ! this is holiday to what was felt  
When Isabella by Lorenzo knelt.

She gaz’d into the fresh-thrown mould, as though  
One glance did fully all its secrets tell ;  
Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know  
Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well ;  
Upon the murderous spot she seem’d to grow,  
Like to a native lilly of the dell :  
Then with her knife, all sudden, she began  
To dig more fervently than misers can.

Soon she turn’d up a soiled glove, whereon  
Her silk had play’d in purple phantasies,  
She kiss’d it with a lip more chill than stone,  
And put it in her bosom, where it dries

And freezes utterly unto the bone

Those dainties made to still an infant's cries :  
Then 'gan she work again ; nor stay'd her care,  
But to throw back at times her veiling hair.

That old nurse stood beside her wondering,

Until her heart felt pity to the core  
At sight of such a dismal labouring,  
And so she kneeled, with her locks all hoar,  
And put her lean hands to the horrid thing :  
Three hours they labour'd at this travail sore ;  
At last they felt the kernel of the grave,  
And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

Ah ! wherefore all this wormy circumstance ?

Why linger at the yawning tomb so long ?  
O for the gentleness of old Romance,  
The simple plaining of a minstrel's song !  
Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance,  
For here, in truth, it doth not well belong  
To speak :—O turn thee to the very tale,  
And taste the music of that vision pale.

With duller steel than the Perséan sword

They cut away no formless monster's head,  
But one, whose gentleness did well accord  
With death, as life. The ancient harps have said,  
Love never dies, but lives, immortal Lord :  
If Love impersonate was ever dead,  
Pale Isabella kiss'd it, and low moan'd.  
'Twas love ; cold,—dead indeed, but not dethron'd.

In anxious secrecy they took it home,

And then the prize was all for Isabel :

She calm'd its wild hair with a golden comb,  
And all around each eye's sepulchral cell  
Pointed each fringed lash ; the smeared loam  
With tears, as chilly as a dripping well,  
She drench'd away:—and still she comb'd, and  
kept  
Sighing all day—and still she kiss'd, and wept.

Then in a silken scarf,—sweet with the dews  
Of precious flowers pluck'd in Araby,  
And divine liquids come with odorous ooze  
Through the cold serpent-pipe refreshfully,—  
She wrapp'd it up ; and for its tomb did choose  
A garden-pot, wherein she laid it by,  
And cover'd it with mould, and o'er it set  
Sweet Basil, which her tears kept ever wet.

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun,  
And she forgot the blue above the trees,  
And she forgot the dells where waters run,  
And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze ;  
She had no knowledge when the day was done,  
And the new morn she saw not : but in peace  
Hung over her sweet Basil evermore,  
And moisten'd it with tears unto the core.

And so she ever fed it with thin tears,  
Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it grew,  
So that it smelt more balmy than its peers  
Of Basil-tufts in Florence ; for it drew  
Nurture besides, and life, from human fears,  
From the fast mouldering head there shut from  
view :

So that the jewel, safely casketed,  
Came forth, and in perfuméd leafits spread.

O Melancholy, linger here awhile !  
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly !  
O Echo, Echo, from some sombre isle,  
Unknown, Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh !  
Spirits in grief, lift up your heads, and smile ;  
Lift up your heads, sweet Spirits, heavily,  
And make a pale light in your cypress glooms,  
Tinting with silver wan your marble tombs.

Moan hither, all ye syllables of woe,  
From the deep throat of sad Melpomene !  
Through bronzed lyre in tragic order go,  
And touch the strings into a mystery ;  
Sound mournfully upon the winds and low ;  
For simple Isabel is soon to be  
Among the dead : She withers, like a palm  
Cut by an Indian for its juicy balm.

O leave the palm to wither by itself ;  
Let not quick Winter chill its dying hour !—  
It may not be—those Baälites of pelf,  
Her brethren, noted the continual shower  
From her dead eyes ; and many a curious elf,  
Among her kindred, wonder'd that such dower  
Of youth and beauty should be thrown aside  
By one mark'd out to be a Noble's bride.

And, furthermore, her brethren wonder'd much  
Why she sat drooping by the Basil green,  
And why it flourish'd, as by magic touch ;  
Greatly they wonder'd what the thing might mean :



They could not surely give belief, that such  
 A very nothing would have power to wean  
 Her from her own fair youth, and pleasures gay,  
 And even remembrance of her love's delay.

Therefore they watch'd a time when they might  
 sift

This hidden whim; and long they watch'd in  
 vain;

For seldom did she go to chapel-shrift,  
 And seldom felt she any hunger-pain;  
 And when she left, she hurried back, as swift  
 As bird on wing to breast its eggs again;  
 And, patient as a hen-bird, sat her there  
 Beside her Basil, weeping through her hair.

Yet they contriv'd to steal the Basil-pot,  
 And to examine it in secret place:  
 The thing was vile with green and livid spot,  
 And yet they knew it was Lorenzo's face:  
 The guerdon of their murder they had got,  
 And so left Florence in a moment's space,  
 Never to turn again.—Away they went,  
 With blood upon their heads, to banishment.

O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away!  
 O Music, Music, breathe despondingly!  
 O Echo, Echo, on some other day,  
 From isles Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh!  
 Spirits of grief, sing not your 'Well-a-way!'  
 For Isabel, sweet Isabel, will die;  
 Will die a death too lone and incomplete,  
 Now they have ta'en away her Basil sweet.

Piteous she look'd on dead and senseless things,  
 Asking for her lost Basil amorously ;  
 And with melodious chuckle in the strings  
 Of her lorn voice, she oftentimes would cry  
 After the Pilgrim in his wanderings,  
 To ask him where her Basil was ; and why  
 'Twas hid from her : ' For cruel 'tis,' said she,  
 ' To steal my Basil-pot away from me.'

And so she pin'd, and so she died forlorn,  
 Imploring for her Basil to the last.  
 No heart was there in Florence but did mourn  
 In pity of her love, so overcast.  
 And a sad ditty of this story born  
 From mouth to mouth through all the country  
 pass'd :  
 Still is the burthen sung—' O cruelty,  
 To steal my Basil-pot away from me !'

### THE EVE OF ST. AGNES

**S**T. AGNES' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was !  
 The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold ;  
 The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,  
 And silent was the flock in woolly fold :  
 Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told  
 His rosary, and while his frosted breath,  
 Like pious incense from a censer old,  
 Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,  
 Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he  
 saith.



And so she pined, and so she died forlorn,  
Imporing for her husband to the last.

ISABELLA



His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man ;  
 Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,  
 And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,  
 Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees :  
 The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,  
 Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails :  
 Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,  
 He passeth by ; and his weak spirit fails  
 To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

Northward he turneth through a little door,  
 And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue  
 Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor ;  
 But no—already had his deathbell rung :  
 The joys of all his life were said and sung :  
 His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve :  
 Another way he went, and soon among  
 Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,  
 And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft ;  
 And so it chanc'd, for many a door was wide,  
 From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,  
 The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide :  
 The level chambers, ready with their pride,  
 Were glowing to receive a thousand guests :  
 The carved angels, ever eager-ey'd,  
 Star'd, where upon their heads the cornice rests,  
 With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on  
 their breasts.

At length burst in the argent revelry,  
 With plume, tiara, and all rich array,

Numerous as shadows haunting faerily  
 The brain, new stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay  
 Of old romance. These let us wish away,  
 And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,  
 Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,  
 On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care,  
 As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,  
 Young virgins might have visions of delight,  
 And soft adorings from their loves receive  
 Upon the honey'd middle of the night,  
 If ceremonies due they did aright ;  
 As, supperless to bed they must retire,  
 And couch supine their beauties, lilly white ;  
 Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require  
 Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline :  
 The music, yearning like a God in pain,  
 She scarcely heard : her maiden eyes divine,  
 Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train  
 Pass by—she heeded not at all : in vain  
 Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,  
 And back retir'd ; not cool'd by high disdain,  
 But she saw not : her heart was elsewhere :  
 She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

She danc'd along with vague, regardless eyes,  
 Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short :  
 The hallow'd hour was near at hand : she sighs  
 Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort



Of whisperers in anger, or in sport ;  
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,  
Hoodwink'd with faery fancy ; all amorn,  
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,  
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

So, purposing each moment to retire,  
She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors,  
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire  
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,  
Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores  
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,  
But for one moment in the tedious hours,  
That he might gaze and worship all unseen ;  
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such  
things have been.

He ventures in : let no buzz'd whisper tell :  
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords  
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel :  
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,  
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,  
Whose very dogs would execrations howl  
Against his lineage : not one breast affords  
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,  
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

Ah, happy chance ! the aged creature came,  
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,  
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,  
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond  
The sound of merriment and chorus bland :

He startled her ; but soon she knew his face,  
 And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,  
 Saying, ' Mercy, Porphyro ! hie thee from this place ;  
 They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty  
 race !

' Get hence ! get hence ! there's dwarfish Hilde-  
 brand ;

He had a fever late, and in the fit

He curséd thee and thine, both house and land :

Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit

More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me ! flit !

Flit like a ghost away.'—' Ah, Gossip dear,

We're safe enough ; here in this arm-chair sit,

And tell me how'—' Good Saints ! not here, not  
 here ;

Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy  
 bier.'

He follow'd through a lowly arched way,

Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,

And as she muttered ' Well-a—well-a-day ! '

He found him in a little moonlight room,

Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb.

' Now tell me where is Madeline,' said he,

' O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom

Which none but secret sisterhood may see,

When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously.'

' St. Agnes ! Ah ! it is St. Agnes' Eve—

Yet men will murder upon holy days :

Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,

And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,

To venture so : it fills me with amaze  
 To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes' Eve!  
 God's help ! my lady fair the conjuror plays  
 This very night : good angels her deceive !  
 But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve.'

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,  
 While Porphyro upon her face doth look,  
 Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone  
 Who keepeth clos'd a wond'rous riddle-book,  
 As spectacted she sits in chimney nook.  
 But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told  
 His lady's purpose ; and he scarce could brook  
 Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,  
 And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,  
 Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart  
 Made purple riot : then doth he propose  
 A stratagem, that makes the beldame start :  
 ' A cruel man and impious thou art :  
 Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream  
 Alone with her good angels, far apart  
 From wicked men like thee. Go, go!—I deem  
 Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst  
 seem.'

' I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,'  
 Quoth Porphyro : ' O may I ne'er find grace  
 When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,  
 If one of her soft ringlets I displace,  
 Or look with ruffian passion in her face :

Good Angela, believe me by these tears ;  
 Or I will, even in a moment's space,  
 Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,  
 And beard them, though they be more fang'd than  
     wolves and bears.'

' Ah ! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul ?  
 A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,  
 Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll ;  
 Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,  
 Were never miss'd.'—Thus plaining, doth she  
     bring  
 A gentler speech from burning Porphyro ;  
 So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,  
 That Angela gives promise she will do  
 Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,  
 Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide  
 Him in a closet, of such privacy  
 That he might see her beauty unesp'y'd,  
 And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,  
 While legion'd faeries pac'd the coverlet,  
 And pale enchantment held her sleepy-ey'd.  
 Never on such a night have lovers met,  
 Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

' It shall be as thou wishest,' said the Dame :  
 ' All cates and dainties shall be stored there  
 Quickly on this feast-night : by the tambour frame  
 Her own lute thou wilt see : no time to spare,  
 For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare

On such a catering trust my dizzy head.

Wait here, my child, with patience ; kneel in  
prayer

The while : Ah ! thou must needs the lady wed,  
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.'

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.

The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd ;

The dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear

To follow her ; with aged eyes aghast

From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,

Through many a dusky gallery, they gain

The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd, and chaste ;

Where Porphyro took covert, pleas'd amain.

His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade,

Old Angela was feeling for the stair,

When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,

Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware :

With silver taper's light, and pious care,

She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led

To a safe level matting. Now prepare,

Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed ;

She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd and  
fled.

Out went the taper as she hurried in ;

Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died :

She clos'd the door, she panted, all akin

To spirits of the air, and visions wide :

No uttered syllable, or, woe betide !

But to her heart, her heart was voluble,  
 Paining with eloquence her balmy side ;  
 As though a tongueless nightingale should swell  
 Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,  
 All garlanded with carven imag'ries  
 Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,  
 And diamonded with panes of quaint device,  
 Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,  
 As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings ;  
 And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,  
 And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,  
 A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens  
 and kings.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,  
 And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,  
 As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon ;  
 Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,  
 And on her silver cross soft amethyst,  
 And on her hair a glory, like a saint :  
 She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,  
 Save wings, for heaven :—Porphyro grew faint :  
 She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

Anon his heart revives : her vespers done,  
 Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees ;  
 Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one ;  
 Loosens her fragrant boddice ; by degrees  
 Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees :  
 Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,  
 Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,



In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,  
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,  
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,  
Until the poppi'd warmth of sleep oppress'd  
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away ;  
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day ;  
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain ;  
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray ;  
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,  
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,  
Porphyro gaz'd upon her empty dress,  
And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced  
To wake into a slumberous tenderness ;  
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,  
And breath'd himself : then from the closet crept,  
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,  
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stept,  
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo !—how fast  
she slept.

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon  
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set  
A table, and, half anguish'd, threw thereon  
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet :—  
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet !  
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,  
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarinet,  
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone :—  
The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,  
 In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,  
 While he from forth the closet brought a heap  
 Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;  
 With jellies soother than the creamy curd,  
 And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;  
 Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd  
 From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,  
 From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

These delicates he heap'd with glowing hand  
 On golden dishes and in baskets bright  
 Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand  
 In the retired quiet of the night,  
 Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—  
 'And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!  
 Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:  
 Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,  
 Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.'

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm  
 Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream  
 By the dusk curtains:—'twas a midnight charm  
 Impossible to melt as iced stream:  
 The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;  
 Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:  
 It seem'd he never, never could redeem  
 From such a stedfast spell his lady's eyes;  
 So mus'd awhile, entoil'd in wooféd phantasies.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—  
 Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,  
 He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,

In Provence call'd, 'La belle dame sans mercy :'  
Close to her ear touching the melody ;—  
Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan :  
He ceas'd—she panted quick—and suddenly  
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone :  
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured  
stone.

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,  
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep :  
There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd  
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep  
At which fair Madeline began to weep,  
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh ;  
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep ;  
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,  
Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

'Ah, Porphyro!' said she, 'but even now  
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,  
Made tuneable with every sweetest vow ;  
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear :  
How chang'd thou art! how pallid, chill, and  
drear!  
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,  
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!  
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,  
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go.'

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far  
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,  
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star  
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose ;

Into her dream he melted, as the rose  
 Blendeth its odour with the violet,—  
 Solution sweet : meantime the frost-wind blows  
 Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet  
 Against the window-panes ; St. Agnes' moon hath  
 set.

'Tis dark : quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet :  
 ' This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline !'  
 'Tis dark : the iced gusts still rave and beat :  
 ' No dream, alas ! alas ! and woe is mine !  
 Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—  
 Cruel ! what traitor could thee hither bring ?  
 I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,  
 Though thou forsakest a deceived thing ;—  
 A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing.'

' My Madeline ! sweet dreamer ! lovely bride !  
 Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest ?  
 Thy beauty's shield, heart-shap'd and vermeil  
 dy'd ?  
 Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest  
 After so many hours of toil and quest,  
 A famish'd pilgrim,—sav'd by miracle.  
 Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest  
 Saving of thy sweet self ; if thou think'st well  
 To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

' Hark ! 'tis an elfin-storm from faery land,  
 Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed :  
 Arise—arise ! the morning is at hand ;—  
 The bloated wassaillers will never heed :—  
 Let us away, my love, with happy speed ;

There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—  
Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead :  
Awake ! arise ! my love, and fearless be,  
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee.'

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,  
For there were sleeping dragons all around,  
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—  
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.—  
In all the house was heard no human sound.  
A chain-droop'd lamp was flickering by each door ;  
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,  
Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar ;  
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall ;  
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide ;  
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,  
With a huge empty flaggon by his side :  
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,  
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns :  
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide :—  
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones ;—  
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

And they are gone : aye, ages long ago  
These lovers fled away into the storm.  
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,  
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form  
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,  
Were long be-nightmar'd. Angela the old  
Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform ;  
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,  
For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold.

*Jan., Feb. 1819.*



## HYPERION

## BOOK I

**D**EEP in the shady sadness of a vale  
 Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,  
 Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,  
 Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,  
 Still as the silence round about his lair ;  
 Forest on forest hung about his head  
 Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,  
 Not so much life as on a summer's day  
 Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,  
 But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.  
 A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more  
 By reason of his fallen divinity  
 Spreading a shade : the Naiad 'mid her reeds  
 Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went,  
 No further than to where his feet had stray'd,  
 And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground  
 His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,  
 Unsceptred ; and his realmless eyes were closed ;  
 While his bow'd head seem'd list'ning to the Earth,  
 His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seem'd no force could wake him from his place ;  
 But there came one, who with a kindred hand  
 Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low  
 With reverence, though to one who knew it not.  
 She was a Goddess of the infant world ;  
 By her in stature the tall Amazon



Had stood a pigmy's height : she would have ta'en  
Achilles by the hair and bent his neck ;  
Or with a finger stay'd Ixion's wheel.  
Her face was large as that of Memphian sphinx,  
Pedestal'd haply in a palace court,  
When sages look'd to Egypt for their lore.  
But oh ! how unlike marble was that face :  
How beautiful, if sorrow had not made  
Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.  
There was a listening fear in her regard,  
As if calamity had but begun ;  
As if the vanward clouds of evil days  
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear  
Was with its stored thunder labouring up.  
One hand she press'd upon that aching spot  
Where beats the human heart, as if just there,  
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain :  
The other upon Saturn's bended neck  
She laid, and to the level of his ear  
Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake  
In solemn tenour and deep organ tone :  
Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue  
Would come in these like accents ; O how frail  
To that large utterance of the early Gods !  
' Saturn, look up !—though wherefore, poor old King ?  
I have no comfort for thee, no not one :  
I cannot say, " O wherefore sleepest thou ? "  
For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth  
Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God ;  
And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,  
Has from thy sceptre pass'd ; and all the air  
Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.  
Thy thunder, conscious of the new command,

Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house ;  
And thy sharp lightning in unpractis'd hands  
Scorches and burns our once serene domain.  
O aching time ! O moments big as years !  
All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,  
And press it so upon our weary griefs  
That unbelief has not a space to breathe.  
Saturn, sleep on :—O thoughtless, why did I  
Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude ?  
Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes ?  
Saturn, sleep on ! while at thy feet I weep.'

As when, upon a tranced summer-night,  
Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,  
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,  
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,  
Save from one gradual solitary gust  
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,  
As if the ebbing air had but one wave ;  
So came these words and went ; the while in tears  
She touch'd her fair large forehead to the ground,  
Just where her falling hair might be outspread  
A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet.  
One moon, with alteration slow, had shed  
Her silver seasons four upon the night,  
And still these two were postured motionless,  
Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern ;  
The frozen God still couchant on the earth,  
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet :  
Until at length old Saturn lifted up  
His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone,  
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,  
And that fair kneeling Goddess ; and then spake,

As with a palsied tongue, and while his beard  
Shook horrid with such aspen-malady :  
' O tender spouse of gold Hyperion,  
Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face ;  
Look up, and let me see our doom in it ;  
Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape  
Is Saturn's ; tell me, if thou hear'st the voice  
Of Saturn ; tell me, if this wrinkling brow,  
Naked and bare of its great diadem,  
Peers like the front of Saturn. Who had power  
To make me desolate ? whence came the strength ?  
How was it nurtur'd to such bursting forth,  
While Fate seem'd strangled in my nervous grasp ?  
But it is so ; and I am smother'd up,  
And buried from all godlike exercise  
Of influence benign on planets pale,  
Of admonitions to the winds and seas,  
Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting,  
And all those acts which Deity supreme  
Doth ease its heart of love in.—I am gone  
Away from my own bosom : I have left  
My strong identity, my real self,  
Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit  
Here on this spot of earth. Search, Thea, search !  
Open thine eyes eterne, and sphere them round  
Upon all space : space starr'd, and lorn of light ;  
Space region'd with life-air ; and barren void ;  
Spaces of fire, and all the yawn of hell.—  
Search, Thea, search ! and tell me, if thou seest  
A certain shape or shadow, making way  
With wings or chariot fierce to repossess  
A heaven he lost erewhile : it must—it must  
Be of ripe progress—Saturn must be King.

Yes, there must be a golden victory ;  
 There must be Gods thrown down, and trumpets  
 blown  
 Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival  
 Upon the gold clouds metropolitan,  
 Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir  
 Of strings in hollow shells ; and there shall be  
 Beautiful things made new, for the surprise  
 Of the sky-children ; I will give command :  
 Thea ! Thea ! Thea ! where is Saturn ?'

This passion lifted him upon his feet,  
 And made his hands to struggle in the air,  
 His Druid locks to shake and ooze with sweat,  
 His eyes to fever out, his voice to cease.  
 He stood, and heard not Thea's sobbing deep ;  
 A little time, and then again he snatch'd  
 Utterance thus.—'But cannot I create ?  
 Cannot I form ? Cannot I fashion forth  
 Another world, another universe,  
 To overbear and crumble this to nought ?  
 Where is another chaos ? Where ?'—That word  
 Found way unto Olympus, and made quake  
 The rebel three.—Thea was startled up,  
 And in her bearing was a sort of hope,  
 As thus she quick-voic'd spake, yet full of awe.

'This cheers our fallen house : come to our friends,  
 O Saturn ! come away, and give them heart ;  
 I know the covert, for thence came I thither.'  
 Thus brief ; then with beseeching eyes she went  
 With backward footing through the shade a space :  
 He follow'd, and she turn'd to lead the way

Through aged boughs, that yielded like the mist  
Which eagles cleave upmounting from their nest.

Meanwhile in other realms big tears were shed,  
More sorrow like to this, and such like woe,  
Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe :  
The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound,  
Groan'd for the old allegiance once more,  
And listen'd in sharp pain for Saturn's voice.  
But one of the whole mammoth-brood still kept  
His sov'reignty, and rule, and majesty ;—  
Blazing Hyperion on his orb'd fire  
Still sat, still snuff'd the incense, teeming up  
From man to the sun's God ; yet unsecure :  
For as among us mortals omens drear  
Fright and perplex, so also shuddered he—  
Not at dog's howl, or gloom-bird's hated screech,  
Or the familiar visiting of one  
Upon the first toll of his passing-bell,  
Or prophesyings of the midnight lamp ;  
But horrors, portion'd to a giant nerve,  
Oft made Hyperion ache. His palace bright  
Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,  
And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,  
Glar'd a blood-red through all its thousand courts,  
Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries ;  
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds  
Flush'd angrily : while sometimes eagle's wings,  
Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,  
Darken'd the place ; and neighing steeds were heard,  
Not heard before by Gods or wondering men.  
Also, when he would taste the spicy wreaths  
Of incense, breath'd aloft from sacred hills,



Instead of sweets, his ample palate took  
 Savour of poisonous brass and metal sick :  
 And so, when harbour'd in the sleepy west,  
 After the full completion of fair day,—  
 For rest divine upon exalted couch  
 And slumber in the arms of melody,  
 He pac'd away the pleasant hours of ease  
 With stride colossal, on from hall to hall ;  
 While far within each aisle and deep recess,  
 His winged minions in close clusters stood,  
 Amaz'd and full of fear ; like anxious men  
 Who on wide plains gather in panting troops,  
 When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers.  
 Even now, while Saturn, rous'd from icy trance,  
 Went step for step with Thea through the woods,  
 Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,  
 Came slope upon the threshold of the west ;  
 Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope  
 In smoothest silence, save what solemn tubes,  
 Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet  
 And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies ;  
 And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape,  
 In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye,  
 That inlet to severe magnificence  
 Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

He enter'd, but he enter'd full of wrath ;  
 His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,  
 And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,  
 That scar'd away the meek ethereal Hours  
 And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared,  
 From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,  
 Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,



And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades,  
Until he reach'd the great main cupola ;  
There standing fierce beneath, he stamped his foot,  
And from the basements deep to the high towers  
Jarr'd his own golden region ; and before  
The quavering thunder thereupon had ceas'd,  
His voice leapt out, despite of godlike curb,  
To this result : ' O dreams of day and night !  
O monstrous forms ! O effigies of pain !  
O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom !  
O lank-ear'd Phantoms of black-weeded pools !  
Why do I know ye ? why have I seen ye ? why  
Is my eternal essence thus distraught  
To see and to behold these horrors new ?  
Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall ?  
Am I to leave this haven of my rest,  
This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,  
This calm luxuriance of blissful light,  
These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,  
Of all my lucent empire ? It is left  
Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine.  
The blaze, the splendor, and the symmetry,  
I cannot see—but darkness, death and darkness.  
Even here, into my centre of repose,  
The shady visions come to domineer,  
Insult, and blind, and stifle up my pomp.—  
Fall !—No, by Tellus and her briny robes !  
Over the fiery frontier of my realms  
I will advance a terrible right arm  
Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove,  
And bid old Saturn take his throne again.'—  
He spake, and ceas'd, the while a heavier threat  
Held struggle with his throat but came not forth ;

For as in theatres of crowded men  
Hubbub increases more they call out 'Hush !'  
So at Hyperion's words the Phantoms pale  
Bestirr'd themselves, thrice horrible and cold ;  
And from the mirror'd level where he stood  
A mist arose, as from a scummy marsh.  
At this, through all his bulk an agony  
Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,  
Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular  
Making slow way, with head and neck convuls'd  
From over-strained might. Releas'd, he fled  
To the eastern gates, and full six dewy hours  
Before the dawn in season due should blush,  
He breath'd fierce breath against the sleepy portals,  
Clear'd them of heavy vapours, burst them wide  
Suddenly on the ocean's chilly streams.  
The planet orb of fire, whereon he rode  
Each day from east to west the heavens through,  
Spun round in sable curtaining of clouds ;  
Nor therefore veiled quiet, blindfold, and hid,  
But ever and anon the glancing spheres,  
Circles, and arcs, and broad-belting colure,  
Glow'd through, and wrought upon the muffling dark  
Sweet-shaped lightnings from the nadir deep  
Up to the zenith,—hieroglyphics old  
Which sages and keen-ey'd astrologers  
Then living on the earth, with labouring thought  
Won from the gaze of many centuries :  
Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge  
Of stone, or marble swart ; their import gone,  
Their wisdom long since fled.—Two wings this orb  
Possess'd for glory, two fair argent wings,  
Ever exalted at the God's approach :

And now, from forth the gloom their plumes immense  
Rose, one by one, till all outspreaded were ;  
While still the dazzling globe maintain'd eclipse,  
Awaiting for Hyperion's command.  
Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne  
And bid the day begin, if but for change.  
He might not :—No, though a primeval God :  
The sacred seasons might not be disturb'd.  
Therefore the operations of the dawn  
Stay'd in their birth, even as here 'tis told.  
Those silver wings expanded sisterly,  
Eager to sail their orb ; the porches wide  
Open'd upon the dusk demesnes of night ;  
And the bright Titan, phrenzied with new woes,  
Unus'd to bend, by hard compulsion bent  
His spirit to the sorrow of the time ;  
And all along a dismal rack of clouds,  
Upon the boundaries of day and night,  
He stretch'd himself in grief and radiance faint.  
There as he lay, the Heaven with its stars  
Look'd down on him with pity, and the voice  
Of Cœlus, from the universal space,  
Thus whisper'd low and solemn in his ear.  
'O brightest of my children dear, earth-born  
And sky-engendered, Son of Mysteries  
All unrevealed even to the powers  
Which met at thy creating ; at whose joys  
And palpitations sweet, and pleasures soft,  
I, Cœlus, wonder, how they came and whence ;  
And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be,  
Distinct, and visible ; symbols divine,  
Manifestations of that beauteous life  
Diffus'd unseen throughout eternal space :

Of these new-form'd art thou, oh brightest child!  
Of these, thy brethren and the Goddesses!  
There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion  
Of son against his sire. I saw him fall,  
I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne!  
To me his arms were spread, to me his voice  
Found way from forth the thunders round his head!  
Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face.  
Art thou, too, near such doom? vague fear there is:  
For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods.  
Divine ye were created, and divine  
In sad demeanour, solemn, undisturb'd,  
Unruffled, like high Gods, ye liv'd and ruled:  
Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath;  
Actions of rage and passion; even as  
I see them, on the mortal world beneath,  
In men who die.—This is the grief, O Son!  
Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall!  
Yet do thou strive; as thou art capable,  
As thou canst move about, an evident God;  
And canst oppose to each malignant hour  
Ethereal presence:—I am but a voice;  
My life is but the life of winds and tides,  
No more than winds and tides can I avail:—  
But thou canst.—Be thou therefore in the van  
Of circumstance; yea, seize the arrow's barb  
Before the tense string murmur.—To the earth!  
For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes.  
Meantime I will keep watch on thy bright sun,  
And of thy seasons be a careful nurse.'—  
Ere half this region-whisper had come down,  
Hyperion arose, and on the stars  
Lifted his curved lids, and kept them wide

Until it ceas'd ; and still he kept them wide :  
And still they were the same bright, patient stars.  
Then with a slow incline of his broad breast,  
Like to a diver in the pearly seas,  
Forward he stoop'd over the airy shore,  
And plung'd all noiseless into the deep night.

## BOOK II

JUST at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings  
Hyperion slid into the rustled air,  
And Saturn gain'd with Thea that sad place  
Where Cybele and the bruised Titans mourn'd.  
It was a den where no insulting light  
Could glimmer on their tears ; where their own groans  
They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar  
Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,  
Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.  
Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seem'd  
Ever as if just rising from a sleep,  
Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns ;  
And thus in thousand hugest phantasies  
Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe.  
Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,  
Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge  
Stubborn'd with iron. All were not assembled :  
Some chain'd in torture, and some wandering.  
Cœus, and Gyges, and Briareüs,  
Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyryon,  
With many more, the brawniest in assault,  
Were pent in regions of laborious breath ;  
Dungeon'd in opaque element, to keep



Their clenched teeth still clench'd, and all their limbs  
Lock'd up like veins of metal, cramp't and screw'd ;  
Without a motion, save of their big hearts  
Heaving in pain, and horribly convuls'd  
With sanguine feverous boiling gurge of pulse.  
Mnemosyne was straying in the world ;  
Far from her moon had Phœbe wandered ;  
And many else were free to roam abroad,  
But for the main, here found they covert drear.  
Scarce images of life, one here, one there,  
Lay vast and edgeways ; like a dismal cirque  
Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor,  
When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,  
In dull November, and their chancel vault,  
The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.  
Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave  
Or word, or look, or action of despair.  
Creüs was one ; his ponderous iron mace  
Lay by him, and a shatter'd rib of rock  
Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.  
Iäpetus another ; in his grasp,  
A serpent's plashy neck ; its barbed tongue  
Squeez'd from the gorge, and all its uncurl'd length  
Dead ; and because the creature could not spit  
Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.  
Next Cottus : prone he lay, chin uppermost,  
As though in pain ; for still upon the flint  
He ground severe his skull, with open mouth  
And eyes at horrid working. Nearest him  
Asia, born of most enormous Caf,  
Who cost her mother Tellus keener pangs,  
Though feminine, than any of her sons :  
More thought than woe was in her dusky face,



For she was prophesying of her glory ;  
And in her wide imagination stood  
Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes,  
By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles.  
Even as Hope upon her anchor leans,  
So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk  
Shed from the broadest of her elephants.  
Above her, on a crag's uneasy shelve,  
Upon his elbow rais'd, all prostrate else,  
Shadow'd Enceladus ; once tame and mild  
As grazing ox unworried in the meads ;  
Now tiger-passion'd, lion-thoughted, wroth,  
He meditated, plotted, and even now  
Was hurling mountains in that second war,  
Not long delay'd, that scar'd the younger Gods  
To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird.  
Not far hence Atlas ; and beside him prone  
Phorcus, the sire of Gorgons. Neighbour'd close  
Oceanus, and Tethys, in whose lap  
Sobb'd Clymene among her tangled hair.  
In midst of all lay Themis, at the feet  
Of Ops the queen all clouded round from sight ;  
No shape distinguishable, more than when  
Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the clouds :  
And many else whose names may not be told.  
For when the Muse's wings are air-ward spread,  
Who shall delay her flight ? And she must chaunt  
Of Saturn, and his guide, who now had climb'd  
With damp and slippery footing from a depth  
More horrid still. Above a sombre cliff  
Their heads appear'd, and up their stature grew  
Till on the level height their steps found ease :  
Then Thea spread abroad her trembling arms

Upon the precincts of this nest of pain,  
 And sidelong fix'd her eye on Saturn's face :  
 There saw she direst strife ; the supreme God  
 At war with all the frailty of grief,  
 Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,  
 Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair.  
 Against these plagues he strove in vain ; for Fate  
 Had pour'd a mortal oil upon his head,  
 A disanointing poison : so that Thea,  
 Affrighted, kept her still, and let him pass  
 First onwards in, among the fallen tribe.

As with us mortal men, the laden heart  
 Is persecuted more, and fever'd more,  
 When it is nighing to the mournful house  
 Where other hearts are sick of the same bruise ;  
 So Saturn, as he walk'd into the midst,  
 Felt faint, and would have sunk among the rest,  
 But that he met Enceladus's eye,  
 Whose mightiness, and awe of him, at once  
 Came like an inspiration ; and he shouted,  
 'Titans, behold your God !' at which some groan'd ;  
 Some started on their feet ; some also shouted ;  
 Some wept, some wail'd, all bow'd with reverence ;  
 And Ops, uplifting her black folded veil,  
 Show'd her pale cheeks, and all her forehead wan,  
 Her eye-brows thin and jet, and hollow eyes.  
 There is a roaring in the bleak-grown pines  
 When Winter lifts his voice ; there is a noise  
 Among immortals when a God gives sign,  
 With hushing finger, how he means to load  
 His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought,  
 With thunder, and with music, and with pomp :

Such noise is like the roar of bleak-grown pines :  
Which, when it ceases in this mountain'd world,  
No other sound succeeds ; but ceasing here,  
Among these fallen, Saturn's voice therefrom  
Grew up like organ, that begins anew  
Its strain, when other harmonies, stopt short,  
Leave the dinn'd air vibrating silverly.  
Thus grew it up—' Not in my own sad breast,  
Which is its own great judge and searcher out,  
Can I find reason why ye should be thus :  
Not in the legends of the first of days,  
Studied from that old spirit-leaved book  
Which starry Uranus with finger bright  
Sav'd from the shores of darkness, when the waves  
Low-ebb'd still hid it up in shallow gloom ;—  
And the which book ye know I ever kept  
For my firm-based footstool :—Ah, infirm !  
Not there, nor in sign, symbol, or portent  
Of element, earth, water, air, and fire,—  
At war, at peace, or inter-quarreling  
One against one, or two, or three, or all  
Each several one against the other three,  
As fire with air loud warring when rain-floods  
Drown both, and press them both against earth's face,  
Where, finding sulphur, a quadruple wrath  
Unhinges the poor world ;—not in that strife,  
Wherefrom I take strange lore, and read it deep,  
Can I find reason why ye should be thus :  
No, no-where can unriddle, though I search,  
And pore on Nature's universal scroll  
Even to swooning, why ye, Divinities,  
The first-born of all shap'd and palpable Gods,  
Should cower beneath what, in comparison,

Is untremendous might. Yet ye are here,  
 O'erwhelm'd, and spurn'd, and batter'd, ye are here!  
 O Titans, shall I say, "Arise!"—Ye groan:  
 Shall I say "Crouch!"—Ye groan. What can I then?  
 O Heaven wide! O unseen parent dear!  
 What can I? Tell me, all ye brethren Gods,  
 How we can war, how engine our great wrath!  
 O speak your counsel now, for Saturn's ear  
 Is all a-hunger'd. Thou, Oceanus,  
 Ponderest high and deep; and in thy face  
 I see, astonied, that severe content  
 Which comes of thought and musing: give us help!

So ended Saturn; and the God of the Sea,  
 Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,  
 But cogitation in his watery shades,  
 Arose, with locks not oozy, and began,  
 In murmurs, which his first-endeavouring tongue  
 Caught infant-like from the far-foamed sands.  
 'O ye, whom wrath consumes! who, passion-stung,  
 Writhe at defeat, and nurse your agonies!  
 Shut up your senses, stifle up your ears,  
 My voice is not a bellows unto ire.  
 Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof  
 How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop:  
 And in the proof much comfort will I give,  
 If ye will take that comfort in its truth.  
 We fall by course of Nature's law, not force  
 Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou  
 Hast sifted well the atom-universe;  
 But for this reason, that thou art the King,  
 And only blind from sheer supremacy,  
 One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,

Through which I wandered to eternal truth.  
And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,  
So art thou not the last ; it cannot be :  
Thou art not the beginning nor the end.  
From chaos and parental darkness came  
Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,  
That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends  
Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,  
And with it light, and light, engendering  
Upon its own producer, forthwith touch'd  
The whole enormous matter into life.  
Upon that very hour, our parentage,  
The Heavens and the Earth, were manifest :  
Then thou first born, and we the giant race,  
Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms.  
Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain ;  
O folly ! for to bear all naked truths,  
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,  
That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well !  
As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far  
Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs ;  
And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth  
In form and shape compact and beautiful,  
In will, in action free, companionship,  
And thousand other signs of purer life ;  
So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,  
A power more strong in beauty, born of us  
And fated to excel us, as we pass  
In glory that old Darkness : nor are we  
Thereby more conquer'd, than by us the rule  
Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull soil  
Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed,  
And feedeth still, more comely than itself ?



Can it deny the chiefdom of green groves?  
 Or shall the tree be envious of the dove  
 Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings  
 To wander wherewithal and find its joys?  
 We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs  
 Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,  
 But eagles golden-feather'd, who do tower  
 Above us in their beauty, and must reign  
 In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law  
 That first in beauty should be first in might:  
 Yea, by that law, another race may drive  
 Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.  
 Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,  
 My dispossessor? Have ye seen his face?  
 Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along  
 By noble winged creatures he hath made?  
 I saw him on the calmed waters scud,  
 With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,  
 That it enforc'd me to bid sad farewell  
 To all my empire: farewell sad I took,  
 And hither came, to see how dolorous fate  
 Had wrought upon ye; and how I might best  
 Give consolation in this woe extreme.  
 Receive the truth, and let it be your balm.'

Whether through poz'd conviction, or disdain,  
 They guarded silence, when Oceanus  
 Left murmuring, what deepest thought can tell?  
 But so it was, none answer'd for a space,  
 Save one whom none regarded, Clymene;  
 And yet she answer'd not, only complain'd,  
 With hectic lips, and eyes up-looking mild,  
 Thus wording timidly among the fierce:



‘ O Father, I am here the simplest voice,  
And all my knowledge is that joy is gone,  
And this thing woe crept in among our hearts,  
There to remain for ever, as I fear :  
I would not bode of evil, if I thought  
So weak a creature could turn off the help  
Which by just right should come of mighty Gods ;  
Yet let me tell my sorrow, let me tell  
Of what I heard, and how it made me weep,  
And know that we had parted from all hope.  
I stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore,  
Where a sweet clime was breathed from a land  
Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers.  
Full of calm joy it was, as I of grief ;  
Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth ;  
So that I felt a movement in my heart  
To chide, and to reproach that solitude  
With songs of misery, music of our woes ;  
And sat me down, and took a mouthed shell  
And murmur’d into it, and made melody—  
O melody no more ! for while I sang,  
And with poor skill let pass into the breeze  
The dull shell’s echo, from a bowery strand  
Just opposite, an island of the sea,  
There came enchantment with the shifting wind,  
That did both drown and keep alive my ears.  
I threw my shell away upon the sand,  
And a wave fill’d it, as my sense was fill’d  
With that new blissful golden melody.  
A living death was in each gush of sounds,  
Each family of rapturous hurried notes,  
That fell, one after one, yet all at once,  
Like pearl beads dropping sudden from their string :

And then another, then another strain,  
Each like a dove leaving its olive perch,  
With music wing'd instead of silent plumes,  
To hover round my head, and make me sick  
Of joy and grief at once. Grief overcame,  
And I was stopping up my frantic ears,  
When, past all hindrance of my trembling hands,  
A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune,  
And still it cry'd, "Apollo! young Apollo!  
The morning-bright Apollo! young Apollo!"  
I fled, it follow'd me, and cry'd "Apollo!"  
O Father, and O Brethren, had ye felt  
Those pains of mine; O Saturn, hadst thou felt,  
Ye would not call this too indulged tongue  
Presumptuous, in thus venturing to be heard.'

So far her voice flow'd on, like timorous brook  
That, lingering along a pebbled coast,  
Doth fear to meet the sea: but sea it met,  
And shudder'd; for the overwhelming voice  
Of huge Enceladus swallow'd it in wrath:  
The ponderous syllables, like sullen waves  
In the half-glutted hollows of reef-rocks,  
Came booming thus, while still upon his arm  
He lean'd; not rising, from supreme contempt.  
'Or shall we listen to the over-wise,  
Or to the over-foolish giant, Gods?  
Not thunderbolt on thunderbolt, till all  
That rebel Jove's whole armoury were spent,  
Not world on world upon these shoulders piled,  
Could agonize me more than baby-words  
In midst of this dethronement horrible.  
Speak! roar! shout! yell! ye sleepy Titans all.

Do ye forget the blows, the buffets vile?  
Are ye not smitten by a youngling arm?  
Dost thou forget, sham Monarch of the Waves,  
Thy scalding in the seas? What, have I rous'd  
Your spleens with so few simple words as these?  
O joy! for now I see ye are not lost:  
O joy! for now I see a thousand eyes  
Wide glaring for revenge!—As this he said,  
He lifted up his stature vast, and stood,  
Still without intermission speaking thus:  
'Now ye are flames, I'll tell you how to burn,  
And purge the ether of our enemies;  
How to feed fierce the crooked stings of fire,  
And singe away the swollen clouds of Jove,  
Stifling that puny essence in its tent.  
O let him feel the evil he hath done;  
For though I scorn Oceanus's lore,  
Much pain have I for more than loss of realms:  
The days of peace and slumberous calm are fled;  
Those days, all innocent of scathing war,  
When all the fair Existences of heaven  
Came open-eyed to guess what we would speak:—  
That was before our brows were taught to frown,  
Before our lips knew else but solemn sounds;  
That was before we knew the winged thing,  
Victory, might be lost, or might be won.  
And be ye mindful that Hyperion,  
Our brightest brother, still is undisgraced—  
Hyperion, lo! his radiance is here!'

All eyes were on Enceladus's face,  
And they beheld, while still Hyperion's name  
Flew from his lips up to the vaulted rocks,

A pallid gleam across his features stern :  
Not savage, for he saw full many a God  
Wroth as himself. He look'd upon them all,  
And in each face he saw a gleam of light,  
But splendor in Saturn's, whose hoar locks  
Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel  
When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove.  
In pale and silver silence they remain'd,  
Till suddenly a splendour, like the morn,  
Pervaded all the beetling gloomy steeps,  
All the sad spaces of oblivion,  
And every gulf, and every chasm old,  
And every height, and every sullen depth,  
Voiceless, or hoarse with loud tormented streams :  
And all the everlasting cataracts,  
And all the headlong torrents far and near,  
Mantled before in darkness and huge shade,  
Now saw the light and made it terrible.  
It was Hyperion :—a granite peak  
His bright feet touch'd, and there he stay'd to view  
The misery his brilliance had betray'd  
To the most hateful seeing of itself.  
Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,  
Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade  
In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk  
Of Memnon's image at the set of sun  
To one who travels from the dusking East :  
Sighs, too, as mournful as that Memnon's harp  
He utter'd, while his hands contemplative  
He press'd together, and in silence stood.  
Despondence seiz'd again the fallen Gods  
At sight of the dejected King of Day,  
And many hid their faces from the light :

But fierce Enceladus sent forth his eyes  
Among the brotherhood ; and, at their glare,  
Uprose Iäpetus, and Creüs too,  
And Phorcus, sea-born, and together strode  
To where he towered on his eminence.  
There those four shouted forth old Saturn's name ;  
Hyperion from the peak loud answered, ' Saturn !'  
Saturn sat near the Mother of the Gods,  
In whose face was no joy, though all the Gods  
Gave from their hollow throats the name of ' Saturn !'

## BOOK III

THUS in alternate uproar and sad peace,  
Amazéd were those Titans utterly.  
O leave them, Muse ! O leave them to their woes ;  
For thou art weak to sing such tumults dire :  
A solitary sorrow best befits  
Thy lips, and antheming a lonely grief.  
Leave them, O muse ! for thou anon wilt find  
Many a fallen old Divinity  
Wandering in vain about bewildered shores.  
Meantime touch piously the Delphic harp,  
And not a wind of heaven but will breathe  
In aid soft warble from the Dorian flute ;  
For lo ! 'tis for the Father of all verse.  
Flush every thing that hath a vermeil hue,  
Let the rose grow intense and warm the air,  
And let the clouds of even and of morn  
Float in voluptuous fleeces o'er the hills ;  
Let the red wine within the goblet boil,  
Cold as a bubbling well ; let faint-lipp'd shells,



On sands, or in great deeps, vermilion turn  
Through all their labyrinths ; and let the maid  
Blush keenly, as with some warm kiss surpris'd.  
Chief isle of the embowered Cyclades,  
Rejoice, O Delos, with thine olives green,  
And poplars, and lawn-shading palms, and beech,  
In which the Zephyr breathes the loudest song,  
And hazels thick, dark-stemm'd beneath the shade :  
Apollo is once more the golden theme !  
Where was he, when the Giant of the Sun  
Stood bright, amid the sorrow of his peers ?  
Together had he left his mother fair  
And his twin-sister sleeping in their bower,  
And in the morning twilight wandered forth  
Beside the osiers of a rivulet,  
Full ankle-deep in lillies of the vale.  
The nightingale had ceas'd, and a few stars  
Were lingering in the heavens, while the thrush  
Began calm-throated. Throughout all the isle  
There was no covert, no retired cave  
Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves,  
Though scarcely heard in many a green recess.  
He listen'd, and he wept, and his bright tears  
Went trickling down the golden bow he held.  
Thus with half-shut suffused eyes he stood,  
While from beneath some cumbrous boughs hard by  
With solemn step an awful Goddess came,  
And there was purport in her looks for him,  
Which he with eager guess began to read  
Perplex'd, the while melodiously he said :  
' How cam'st thou over the unfooted sea ?  
Or hath that antique mien and robed form  
Mov'd in these vales invisible till now ?



Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping o'er  
The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone  
In cool mid-forest. Surely I have traced  
The rustle of those ample skirts about  
These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers  
Lift up their heads, as still the whisper pass'd.  
Goddess! I have beheld those eyes before,  
And their eternal calm, and all that face,  
Or I have dream'd.—'Yes,' said the supreme shape,  
'Thou hast dream'd of me; and awaking up  
Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side,  
Whose strings touch'd by thy fingers, all the vast  
Unwearied ear of the whole universe  
Listen'd in pain and pleasure at the birth  
Of such new tuneful wonder. Is't not strange  
That thou shouldst weep, so gifted? Tell me, youth,  
What sorrow thou canst feel; for I am sad  
When thou dost shed a tear: explain thy griefs  
To one who in this lonely isle hath been  
The watcher of thy sleep and hours of life,  
From the young day when first thy infant hand  
Pluck'd witless the weak flowers, till thine arm  
Could bend that bow heroic to all times.  
Show thy heart's secret to an ancient Power  
Who hath forsaken old and sacred thrones  
For prophecies of thee, and for the sake  
Of loveliness new born.'—Apollo then,  
With sudden scrutiny and gloomless eyes,  
Thus answer'd, while his white melodious throat  
Throbb'd with the syllables.—'Mnemosyne!  
Thy name is on my tongue, I know not how;  
Why should I tell thee what thou so well seest?  
Why should I strive to show what from thy lips

Would come no mystery? For me, dark, dark,  
And painful vile oblivion seals my eyes :  
I strive to search wherefore I am so sad,  
Until a melancholy numbs my limbs ;  
And then upon the grass I sit, and moan,  
Like one who once had wings.—O why should I  
Feel curs'd and thwarted, when the liegeless air  
Yields to my step aspirant? why should I  
Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet?  
Goddess benign, point forth some unknown thing :  
Are there not other regions than this isle?  
What are the stars? There is the sun, the sun !  
And the most patient brilliance of the moon !  
And stars by thousands ! Point me out the way  
To any one particular beauteous star,  
And I will flit into it with my lyre,  
And make its silvery splendour pant with bliss.  
I have heard the cloudy thunder : Where is power?  
Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity  
Makes this alarum in the elements,  
While I here idle listen on the shores  
In fearless yet in aching ignorance?  
O tell me, lonely Goddess, by thy harp,  
That waileth every morn and eventide,  
Tell me why thus I rave, about these groves !  
Mute thou remainest--Mute ! yet I can read  
A wondrous lesson in thy silent face :  
Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.  
Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions,  
Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,  
Creations and destroyings, all at once  
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,  
And deify me, as if some blithe wine

Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk,  
 And so become immortal.'—Thus the God,  
 While his enkindled eyes, with level glance  
 Beneath his white soft temples, stedfast kept  
 Trembling with light upon Mnemosyne.  
 Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush  
 All the immortal fairness of his limbs ;  
 Most like the struggle at the gate of death ;  
 Or liker still to one who should take leave  
 Of pale immortal death, and with a pang  
 As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse  
 Die into life : so young Apollo anguish'd :  
 His very hair, his golden tresses famed  
 Kept undulation round his eager neck.  
 During the pain Mnemosyne upheld  
 Her arms as one who prophesied.—At length  
 Apollo shriek'd ;—and lo ! from all his limbs  
 Celestial . . . . .

1818-19.

## LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

AH, what can ail thee, wretched wight,  
 Alone and palely loitering ;  
 The sedge is wither'd from the lake,  
 And no birds sing.

Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,  
 So haggard and so woe-begone ?  
 The squirrel's granary is full,  
 And the harvest's done.

I see a lilly on thy brow,  
With anguish moist and fever dew ;  
And on thy cheek a fading rose  
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads  
Full beautiful, a faery's child ;  
Her hair was long, her foot was light,  
And her eyes were wild.

I set her on my pacing steed,  
And nothing else saw all day long ;  
For sideways would she lean, and sing  
A faery's song.

I made a garland for her head,  
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone ;  
She look'd at me as she did love,  
And made sweet moan.

She found me roots of relish sweet,  
And honey wild, and manna dew ;  
And sure in language strange she said,  
I love thee true.

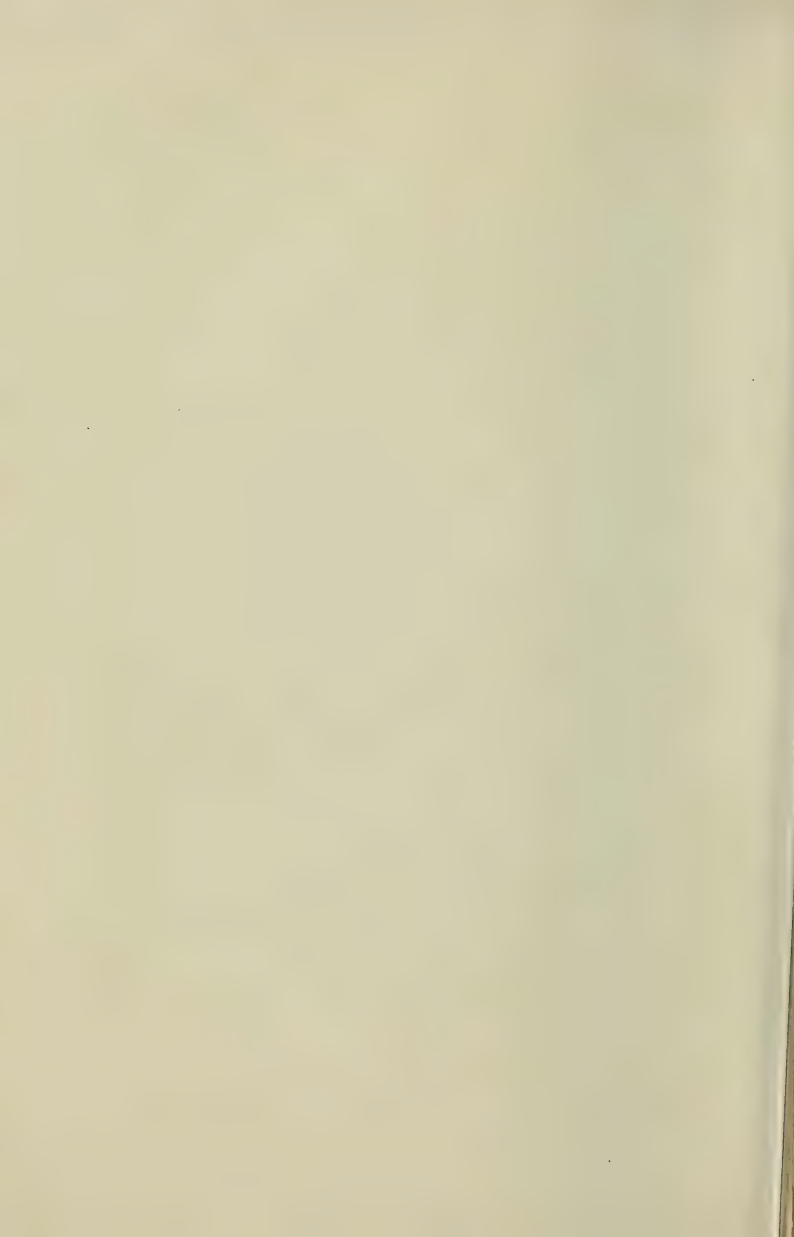
She took me to her elfin grot,  
And there she gaz'd and sighed deep,  
And there I shut her wild sad eyes—  
So kiss'd to sleep.

And there we slumber'd on the moss,  
And there I dream'd, ah woe betide,  
The latest dream I ever dream'd  
On the cold hill side.



'I set her on my puring steed  
and nothing else saw all day long.  
For so delong would she bend, and sing  
A faery's song'

L.A. BELLE DAME SANS MERCI





I saw pale kings, and princes too,  
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;  
Who cry'd—' La belle Dame sans merci  
Hath thee in thrall!'

I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam  
With horrid warning gaped wide,  
And I awoke, and found me here  
On the cold hill side.

And this is why I sojourn here  
Alone and palely loitering,  
Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,  
And no birds sing.

1819.

## THE EVE OF SAINT MARK

UPON a Sabbath-day it fell;  
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell,  
That call'd the folk to evening prayer;  
The city streets were clean and fair  
From wholesome drench of April rains;  
And, on the western window panes,  
The chilly sunset faintly told  
Of unmatur'd green vallies cold,  
Of the green thorny bloomless hedge,  
Of rivers new with spring-tide sedge,  
Of primroses by shelter'd rills,  
And daisies on the aguish hills.  
Twice holy was the Sabbath-bell:  
The silent streets were crowded well

With staid and pious companies,  
Warm from their fire-side orat'ries ;  
And moving, with demurest air,  
To even-song, and vesper prayer.  
Each arched porch, and entry low,  
Was fill'd with patient folk and slow,  
With whispers hush, and shuffling feet,  
While play'd the organ loud and sweet.

The bells had ceas'd, the prayers begun,  
And Bertha had not yet half done  
A curious volume, patch'd and torn,  
That all day long, from earliest morn,  
Had taken captive her two eyes,  
Among its golden broideries ;  
Perplex'd her with a thousand things,—  
The stars of Heaven, and angels' wings,  
Martyrs in a fiery blaze,  
Azure saints in silver rays,  
Moses' breastplate, and the seven  
Candlesticks John saw in Heaven,  
The wingéd Lion of St. Mark,  
And the Covenantal Ark,  
With its many mysteries,  
Cherubim and golden mice.

Bertha was a maiden fair,  
Dwelling in th' old Minster-square ;  
From her fire-side she could see,  
Sidelong, its rich antiquity,  
Far as the Bishop's garden-wall ;  
Where sycamores and elm-trees tall,

Full-leav'd, the forest had outstript,  
By no sharp north-wind ever nipt,  
So shelter'd by the mighty pile.  
Bertha arose, and read awhile,  
With forehead 'gainst the window-pane.  
Again she try'd, and then again,  
Until the dusk eve left her dark  
Upon the legend of St. Mark.  
From plaited lawn-frill, fine and thin,  
She lifted up her soft warm chin,  
With aching neck and swimming eyes,  
And daz'd with saintly imageries.

All was gloom, and silent all,  
Save now and then the still foot-fall  
Of one returning homewards late,  
Past the echoing Minster-gate.  
The clamorous daws, that all the day  
Above tree-tops and towers play,  
Pair by pair had gone to rest,  
Each in its ancient belfry-nest,  
Where asleep they fall betimes,  
To music of the drowsy chimes.

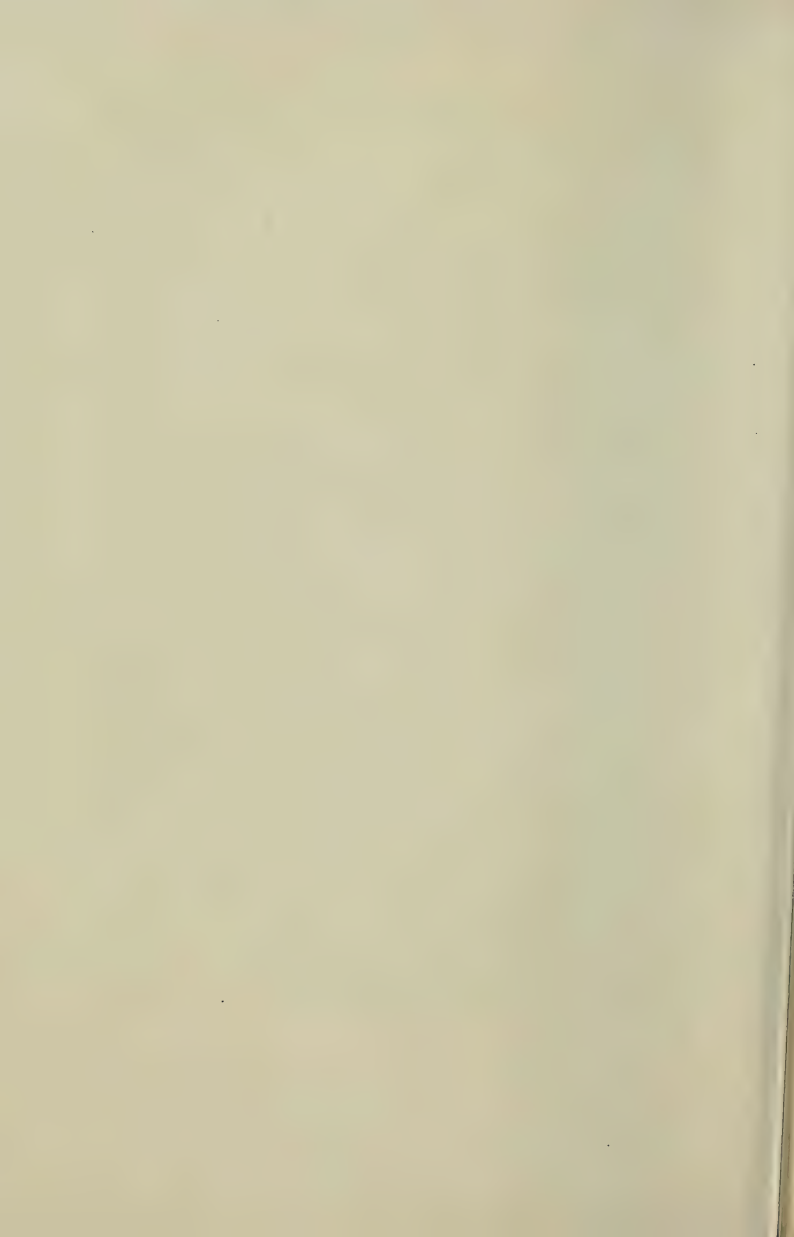
All was silent, all was gloom,  
Abroad and in the homely room :  
Down she sat, poor cheated soul !  
And struck a lamp from the dismal coal ;  
Lean'd forward, with bright drooping hair  
And slant book, full against the glare.  
Her shadow, in uneasy guise,  
Hover'd about, a giant size,

On ceiling-beam and old oak chair,  
 The parrot's cage, and panel square ;  
 And the warm angled winter screen,  
 On which were many monsters seen,  
 Call'd doves of Siam, Lima mice,  
 And legless birds of Paradise,  
 Macaw, and tender Avadavat,  
 And silken-furr'd Angora cat.  
 Untir'd she read, her shadow still  
 Glower'd about, as it would fill  
 The room with wildest forms and shades,  
 As though some ghostly queen of spades  
 Had come to mock behind her back,  
 And dance, and ruffle her garments black.  
 Untir'd she read the legend page,  
 Of holy Mark, from youth to age,  
 On land, on sea, in pagan chains,  
 Rejoicing for his many pains.  
 Sometimes the learned eremite,  
 With golden star, or dagger bright,  
 Referr'd to pious poesies  
 Written in smallest crow-quill size  
 Beneath the text ; and thus the rhyme  
 Was parcell'd out from time to time :  
 —' Als writith he of swevenis,  
 Men han beforne they wake in bliss,  
 Whanne that hir friendes thinke hem bound  
 In crimped shroude farre under grounde ;  
 And how a litling child mote be  
 A saint er its nativitie,  
 Gif that the modre (God her blesse !)  
 Kepen in solitarinesse,  
 And kissen devoute the holy croce.



'Untired she read the legend page  
Of holy Mark, from youth to age.'

THE EVE OF ST. MARK





Of Goddes love, and Sathan's force,—  
He writith ; and thinges many mo :  
Of swiche thinges I may not show.  
Bot I must tellen verilie  
Somedel of Saintè Cicilie,  
And chieflie what he auctorethe  
Of Saintè Markis life and dethe :'

At length her constant eyelids come  
Upon the fervent martyrdom ;  
Then lastly to his holy shrine,  
Exalt amid the tapers' shine  
At Venice,—

*January 1819.*

DESCRIPTIVE & REFLECTIVE  
POEMS

'I STOOD TIP-TOE UPON A LITTLE HILL'

'Places of nestling green for Poets made.'

—*Story of Rimini.*

I STOOD tip-toe upon a little hill,  
The air was cooling, and so very still,  
That the sweet buds which with a modest pride  
Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,  
Their scanty leav'd, and finely tapering stems,  
Had not yet lost those starry diadems  
Caught from the early sobbing of the morn.  
The clouds were pure and white as flocks new shorn,  
And fresh from the clear brook ; sweetly they slept  
On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept  
A little noiseless noise among the leaves,  
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves :  
For not the faintest motion could be seen  
Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green.  
There was wide wand'ring for the greediest eye,  
To peer about upon variety ;  
Far round the horizon's crystal air to skim,  
And trace the dwindled edgings of its brim ;  
To picture out the quaint, and curious bending  
Of a fresh woodland alley, never ending ;

Or by the bowery clefts, and leafy shelves,  
Guess where the jaunty streams refresh themselves.  
I gazed awhile, and felt as light, and free  
As though the fanning wings of Mercury  
Had play'd upon my heels : I was light-hearted,  
And many pleasures to my vision started ;  
So I straightway began to pluck a posey  
Of luxuries bright, milky, soft and rosy.

A bush of May flowers with the bees about them ;  
Ah, sure no tasteful nook would be without them ;  
And let a lush laburnum oversweep them,  
And let long grass grow round the roots to keep them  
Moist, cool and green ; and shade the violets,  
That they may bind the moss in leafy nets.

A filbert hedge with wild briar overtwin'd,  
And clumps of woodbine taking the soft wind  
Upon their summer thrones ; there too should be  
The frequent chequer of a youngling tree,  
That with a score of light green brethren shoots  
From the quaint mossiness of aged roots :  
Round which is heard a spring-head of clear waters  
Babbling so wildly of its lovely daughters  
The spreading blue-bells : it may haply mourn  
That such fair clusters should be rudely torn  
From their fresh beds, and scatter'd thoughtlessly  
By infant hands, left on the path to die.

Open afresh your round of starry folds,  
Ye ardent marigolds !  
Dry up the moisture from your golden lids,  
For great Apollo bids

That in these days your praises should be sung  
 On many harps, which he has lately strung ;  
 And when again your dewiness he kisses,  
 Tell him, I have you in my world of blisses :  
 So haply when I rove in some far vale,  
 His mighty voice may come upon the gale.

Here are sweet peas, on tip-toe for a flight :  
 With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white,  
 And taper fingers catching at all things,  
 To bind them all about with tiny rings.

Linger awhile upon some bending planks  
 That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks,  
 And watch intently Nature's gentle doings :  
 They will be found softer than ring-dove's cooings.  
 How silent comes the water round that bend ;  
 Not the minutest whisper does it send  
 To the o'erhanging shallows : blades of grass  
 Slowly across the chequer'd shadows pass.  
 Why, you might read two sonnets, ere they reach  
 To where the hurrying freshnesses aye preach  
 A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds ;  
 Where swarms of minnows show their little  
     heads,  
 Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams,  
 To taste the luxury of sunny beams  
 Temper'd with coolness. How they ever wrestle  
 With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle  
 Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand.  
 If you but scantily hold out the hand,  
 That very instant not one will remain ;  
 But turn your eye, and they are there again.

The ripples seem right glad to reach those cresses,  
And cool themselves among the em'rald tresses ;  
The while they cool themselves, they freshness give,  
And moisture, that the bowery green may live :  
So keeping up an interchange of favours,  
Like good men in the truth of their behaviours  
Sometimes goldfinches one by one will drop  
From low hung branches ; little space they stop ;  
But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek ;  
Then off at once, as in a wanton freak :  
Or perhaps, to show their black, and golden wings,  
Pausing upon their yellow flutterings.  
Were I in such a place, I sure should pray  
That nought less sweet, might call my thoughts  
    away,  
Than the soft rustle of a maiden's gown  
Fanning away the dandelion's down ;  
Than the light music of her nimble toes  
Patting against the sorrel as she goes.  
How she would start, and blush, thus to be caught  
Playing in all her innocence of thought.  
O let me lead her gently o'er the brook,  
Watch her half-smiling lips, and downward look ;  
O let me for one moment touch her wrist ;  
Let me one moment to her breathing list ;  
And as she leaves me may she often turn  
Her fair eyes looking through her locks auburne.  
What next ? A tuft of evening primroses,  
O'er which the mind may hover till it dozes ;  
O'er which it well might take a pleasant sleep,  
But that 'tis ever startled by the leap  
Of buds into ripe flowers ; or by the fitting  
Of diverse moths, that aye their rest are quitting ;

Or by the moon lifting her silver rim  
Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim  
Coming into the blue with all her light.  
O Maker of sweet poets, dear delight  
Of this fair world, and all its gentle livers ;  
Spangler of clouds, halo of crystal rivers,  
Mingler with leaves, and dew and tumbling streams,  
Closer of lovely eyes to lovely dreams,  
Lover of loneliness, and wandering,  
Of upcast eye, and tender pondering !  
Thee must I praise above all other glories  
That smile us on to tell delightful stories.  
For what has made the sage or poet write  
But the fair paradise of Nature's light ?  
In the calm grandeur of a sober line,  
We see the waving of the mountain pine ;  
And when a tale is beautifully staid,  
We feel the safety of a hawthorn glade :  
When it is moving on luxurious wings,  
The soul is lost in pleasant smotherings :  
Fair dewy roses brush against our faces,  
And flowering laurels spring from diamond vases ;  
O'er head we see the jasmine and sweet briar,  
And bloomy grapes laughing from green attire ;  
While at our feet, the voice of crystal bubbles  
Charms us at once away from all our troubles :  
So that we feel uplifted from the world,  
Walking upon the white clouds wreath'd and  
curl'd.

So felt he, who first told, how Psyche went  
On the smooth wind to realms of wonderment ;  
What Psyche felt, and Love, when their full lips  
First touch'd ; what amorous, and fondling nips



They gave each other's cheeks ; with all their sighs,  
And how they kist each other's tremulous eyes :  
The silver lamp,—the ravishment,—the wonder—  
The darkness,—loneliness,—the fearful thunder ;  
Their woes gone by, and both to heaven upflown,  
To bow for gratitude before Jove's throne.  
So did he feel, who pull'd the boughs aside,  
That we might look into a forest wide,  
To catch a glimpse of Fauns, and Dryades  
Coming with softest rustle through the trees ;  
And garlands woven of flowers wild, and sweet,  
Upheld on ivory wrists, or sporting feet :  
Telling us how fair, trembling Syrinx fled  
Arcadian Pan, with such a fearful dread.  
Poor nymph,—poor Pan,—how he did weep to find,  
Nought but a lovely sighing of the wind  
Along the reedy stream ; a half heard strain,  
Full of sweet desolation—balmy pain.

What first inspir'd a bard of old to sing  
Narcissus pining o'er the untainted spring ?  
In some delicious ramble, he had found  
A little space, with boughs all woven round ;  
And in the midst of all, a clearer pool  
Than e'er reflected in its pleasant cool,  
The blue sky here, and there, serenely peeping  
Through tendril wreaths fantastically creeping.  
And on the bank a lonely flower he spied,  
A meek and forlorn flower, with naught of pride,  
Drooping its beauty o'er the watery clearness,  
To woo its own sad image into nearness :  
Deaf to light Zephyrus it would not move ;  
But still would seem to droop, to pine, to love.

So while the poet stood in this sweet spot,  
 Some fainter gleamings o'er his fancy shot ;  
 Nor was it long ere he had told the tale  
 Of young Narcissus, and sad Echo's bale.

Where had he been, from whose warm head out-flew  
 That sweetest of all songs, that ever new,  
 That aye refreshing, pure deliciousness,  
 Coming ever to bless  
 The wanderer by moonlight? to him bringing  
 Shapes from the invisible world, unearthly singing  
 From out the middle air, from flowery nests,  
 And from the pillowy silkiness that rests  
 Full in the speculation of the stars.  
 Ah! surely he had burst our mortal bars ;  
 Into some wond'rous region he had gone,  
 To search for thee, divine Endymion !

He was a Poet, sure a lover too,  
 Who stood on Latmus' top, what time there blew  
 Soft breezes from the myrtle vale below ;  
 And brought in faintness solemn, sweet, and slow  
 A hymn from Dian's temple ; while upswelling,  
 The incense went to her own starry dwelling.  
 But though her face was clear as infant's eyes,  
 Though she stood smiling o'er the sacrifice,  
 The Poet wept at her so piteous fate,  
 Wept that such beauty should be desolate :  
 So in fine wrath some golden sounds he won,  
 And gave meek Cynthia her Endymion.

Queen of the wide air ; thou most lovely queen  
 Of all the brightness that mine eyes have seen !

As thou exceedest all things in thy shine,  
So every tale, does this sweet tale of thine.  
O for three words of honey, that I might  
Tell but one wonder of thy bridal night !

Where distant ships do seem to show their keels,  
Phœbus awhile delay'd his mighty wheels,  
And turn'd to smile upon thy bashful eyes,  
Ere he his unseen pomp would solemnize.  
The evening weather was so bright, and clear,  
That men of health were of unusual cheer ;  
Stepping like Homer at the trumpet's call,  
Or young Apollo on the pedestal :  
And lovely women were as fair and warm,  
As Venus looking sideways in alarm.  
The breezes were ethereal, and pure,  
And crept through half-closed lattices to cure  
The languid sick ; it cool'd their fever'd sleep,  
And sooth'd them into slumbers full and deep.  
Soon they awoke clear ey'd : nor burnt with thirsting,  
Nor with hot fingers, nor with temples bursting :  
And springing up, they met the wond'ring sight  
Of their dear friends, nigh foolish with delight ;  
Who feel their arms, and breasts, and kiss and stare,  
And on their placid foreheads part the hair.  
Young men, and maidens at each other gaz'd  
With hands held back, and motionless, amaz'd  
To see the brightness in each other's eyes ;  
And so they stood, fill'd with a sweet surprise,  
Until their tongues were loos'd in poesy.  
Therefore no lover did of anguish die :  
But the soft numbers, in that moment spoken,  
Made silken ties, that never may be broken.

Cynthia! I cannot tell the greater blisses,  
 That follow'd thine, and thy dear shepherd's kisses :  
 Was there a poet born?—but now no more,  
 My wand'ring spirit must no farther soar.—

1816.

### SLEEP AND POETRY

' As I lay in my bed slepe full unmete  
 Was unto me, but why that I ne might  
 Rest I ne wist, for there n'as erthly wight  
 [As I suppose] had more of hertis ese  
 Than I, for I n'ad sicknesse nor disese.'

CHAUCER.

**W**HAT is more gentle than a wind in summer ?  
 What is more soothing than the pretty hummer  
 That stays one moment in an open flower,  
 And buzzes cheerily from bower to bower ?  
 What is more tranquil than a musk-rose blowing  
 In a green island, far from all men's knowing ?  
 More healthful than the leafiness of dales ?  
 More secret than a nest of nightingales ?  
 More serene than Cordelia's countenance ?  
 More full of visions than a high romance ?  
 What, but thee Sleep ? Soft closer of our eyes !  
 Low murmurer of tender lullabies !  
 Light hoverer around our happy pillows !  
 Wreather of poppy buds, and weeping willows !  
 Silent entangler of a beauty's tresses !  
 Most happy listener ! when the morning blesses  
 Thee for enlivening all the cheerful eyes  
 That glance so brightly at the new sun-rise.

But what is higher beyond thought than thee?  
Fresher than berries of a mountain tree?  
More strange, more beautiful, more smooth, more  
regal,  
Than wings of swans, than doves, than dim-seen eagle?  
What is it? And to what shall I compare it?  
It has a glory, and nought else can share it:  
The thought thereof is awful, sweet, and holy,  
Chasing away all worldliness and folly;  
Coming sometimes like fearful claps of thunder,  
Or the low rumblings earth's regions under;  
And sometimes like a gentle whispering  
Of all the secrets of some wond'rous thing  
That breathes about us in the vacant air;  
So that we look around with prying stare,  
Perhaps to see shapes of light, aerial limning,  
And catch soft floatings from a faint-heard hymning;  
To see the laurel wreath, on high suspended,  
That is to crown our name when life is ended.  
Sometimes it gives a glory to the voice,  
And from the heart up-springs, rejoice! rejoice!  
Sounds which will reach the Framer of all things,  
And die away in ardent mutterings.

No one who once the glorious sun has seen,  
And all the clouds, and felt his bosom clean  
For his great Maker's presence, but must know  
What 't is I mean, and feel his being glow:  
Therefore no insult will I give his spirit,  
By telling what he sees from native merit.

O Poesy! for thee I hold my pen  
That am not yet a glorious denizen



Of thy wide heaven—Should I rather kneel  
Upon some mountain-top until I feel  
A glowing splendour round about me hung,  
And echo back the voice of thine own tongue ?  
O Poesy ! for thee I grasp my pen  
That am not yet a glorious denizen  
Of thy wide heaven ; yet, to my ardent prayer,  
Yield from thy sanctuary some clear air,  
Smooth'd for intoxication by the breath  
Of flowering bays, that I may die a death  
Of luxury, and my young spirit follow  
The morning sun-beams to the great Apollo  
Like a fresh sacrifice ; or, if I can bear  
The o'erwhelming sweets, 'twill bring to me the fair  
Visions of all places : a bowery nook  
Will be elysium—an eternal book  
Whence I may copy many a lovely saying  
About the leaves, and flowers—about the playing  
Of nymphs in woods, and fountains ; and the  
shade  
Keeping a silence round a sleeping maid ;  
And many a verse from so strange influence  
That we must ever wonder how, and whence  
It came. Also imaginings will hover  
Round my fire-side, and haply there discover  
Vistas of solemn beauty, where I'd wander  
In happy silence, like the clear Meander  
Through its lone vales ; and where I found a spot  
Of awfuller shade, or an enchanted grot,  
Or a green hill o'erspread with chequer'd dress  
Of flowers, and fearful from its loveliness,  
Write on my tablets all that was permitted,  
All that was for our human senses fitted.



Then the events of this wide world I'd seize  
 Like a strong giant, and my spirit teaze  
 Till at its shoulders it should proudly see  
 Wings to find out an immortality.

Stop and consider ! life is but a day ;  
 A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way  
 From a tree's summit ; a poor Indian's sleep  
 While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep  
 Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan ?  
 Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown ;  
 The reading of an ever-changing tale ;  
 The light uplifting of a maiden's veil ;  
 A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air ;  
 A laughing school-boy, without grief or care,  
 Riding the springy branches of an elm.

O for ten years, that I may overwhelm  
 Myself in poesy ; so I may do the deed  
 That my own soul has to itself decreed.  
 Then will I pass the countries that I see  
 In long perspective, and continually  
 Taste their pure fountains. First the realm I'll  
     pass  
 Of Flora, and old Pan : sleep in the grass,  
 Feed upon apples red, and strawberries,  
 And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees ;  
 Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady places,  
 To woo sweet kisses from averted faces,—  
 Play with their fingers, touch their shoulders white  
 Into a pretty shrinking with a bite  
 As hard as lips can make it : till agreed,  
 A lovely tale of human life we'll read.

And one will teach a tame dove how it best  
May fan the cool air gently o'er my rest ;  
Another, bending o'er her nimble tread,  
Will set a green robe floating round her head,  
And still will dance with ever varied ease,  
Smiling upon the flowers and the trees :  
Another will entice me on, and on  
Through almond blossoms and rich cinnamon ;  
Till in the bosom of a leafy world  
We rest in silence, like two gems upcurl'd  
In the recesses of a pearly shell.

And can I ever bid these joys farewell ?  
Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,  
Where I may find the agonies, the strife  
Of human hearts : for lo ! I see afar,  
O'ersailing the blue cragginess, a car  
And steeds with streamy manes—the charioteer  
Looks out upon the winds with glorious fear :  
And now the numerous trappings quiver lightly  
Along a huge cloud's ridge ; and now with sprightly  
Wheel downward come they into fresher skies,  
Tipt round with silver from the sun's bright eyes.  
Still downward with capacious whirl they glide ;  
And now I see them on a green-hill's side  
In breezy rest among the nodding stalks.  
The charioteer with wond'rous gesture talks  
To the trees and mountains ; and there soon appear  
Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear,  
Passing along before a dusky space  
Made by some mighty oaks : as they would chase  
Some ever-fleeting music on they sweep.  
Lo ! how they murmur, laugh, and smile, and weep :

Some with upholden hand and mouth severe ;  
Some with their faces muffled to the ear  
Between their arms ; some, clear in youthful bloom,  
Go glad and smilingly athwart the gloom ;  
Some looking back, and some with upward gaze ;  
Yes, thousands in a thousand different ways  
Flit onward—now a lovely wreath of girls  
Dancing their sleek hair into tangled curls ;  
And now broad wings. Most awfully intent  
The driver of those steeds is forward bent,  
And seems to listen : O that I might know  
All that he writes with such a hurrying glow.

The visions all are fled—the car is fled  
Into the light of heaven, and in their stead  
A sense of real things comes doubly strong,  
And, like a muddy stream, would bear along  
My soul to nothingness : but I will strive  
Against all doubtings, and will keep alive  
The thought of that same chariot, and the strange  
Journey it went.

Is there so small a range  
In the present strength of manhood, that the high  
Imagination cannot freely fly  
As she was wont of old ? prepare her steeds,  
Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds  
Upon the clouds ? Has she not shown us all ?  
From the clear space of ether, to the small  
Breath of new buds unfolding ? From the meaning  
Of Jove's large eye-brow, to the tender greening  
Of April meadows ? Here her altar shone,  
E'en in this isle ; and who could paragon

The fervid choir that lifted up a noise  
Of harmony, to where it aye will poise  
Its mighty self of convoluting sound,  
Huge as a planet, and like that roll round,  
Eternally around a dizzy void?  
Ay, in those days the Muses were nigh cloy'd  
With honors; nor had any other care  
Than to sing out and soothe their wavy hair.

Could all this be forgotten? Yes, a schism  
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism,  
Made great Apollo blush for this his land.  
Men were thought wise who could not understand  
His glories: with a puling infant's force  
They sway'd about upon a rocking horse,  
And thought it Pegasus. Ah dismal soul'd!  
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd  
Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue  
Bar'd its eternal bosom, and the dew  
Of summer nights collected still to make  
The morning precious: beauty was awake!  
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead  
To things ye knew not of,—were closely wed  
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule  
And compass vile: so that ye taught a school  
Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,  
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,  
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:  
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask  
Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!  
That blasphem'd the bright Lyrist to his face,  
And did not know it,—no, they went about,  
Holding a poor, decrepit standard out

Mark'd with most flimsy mottos, and in large  
The name of one Boileau !

O ye whose charge

It is to hover round our pleasant hills !  
Whose congregated majesty so fills  
My boundly reverence, that I cannot trace  
Your hallowed names, in this unholy place,  
So near those common folk ; did not their shames  
Affright you ? Did our old lamenting Thames  
Delight you ? Did ye never cluster round  
Delicious Avon, with a mournful sound,  
And weep ? Or did ye wholly bid adieu  
To regions where no more the laurel grew ?  
Or did ye stay to give a welcoming  
To some lone spirits who could proudly sing  
Their youth away, and die ? 'Twas even so :  
But let me think away those times of woe :  
Now 'tis a fairer season ; ye have breathed  
Rich benedictions o'er us ; ye have wreathed  
Fresh garlands : for sweet music has been heard  
In many places ;—some has been upstirr'd  
From out its crystal dwelling in a lake,  
By a swan's ebon bill ; from a thick brake,  
Nested and quiet in a valley mild,  
Bubbles a pipe ; fine sounds are floating wild  
About the earth : happy are ye and glad.

These things are doubtless : yet in truth we've had  
Strange thunders from the potency of song ;  
Mingled indeed with what is sweet and strong,  
From majesty : but in clear truth the themes  
Are ugly cubs, the Poets Polyphemes



Disturbing the grand sea. A drainless shower  
Of light is poesy ; 'tis the supreme of power ;  
'Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm.  
The very archings of her eye-lids charm  
A thousand willing agents to obey,  
And still she governs with the mildest sway :  
But strength alone though of the Muses born  
Is like a fallen angel : trees uptorn,  
Darkness, and worms, and shrouds, and sepulchres  
Delight it ; for it feeds upon the burrs,  
And thorns of life ; forgetting the great end  
Of poesy, that it should be a friend  
To soothe the cares, and lift the thoughts of man.

Yet I rejoice : a myrtle fairer than  
E'er grew in Paphos, from the bitter weeds  
Lifts its sweet head into the air, and feeds  
A silent space with ever sprouting green.  
All tenderest birds there find a pleasant screen,  
Creep through the shade with jaunty fluttering,  
Nibble the little cupped flowers and sing.  
Then let us clear away the choking thorns  
From round its gentle stem ; let the young fawns,  
Yeaned in after times, when we are flown,  
Find a fresh sward beneath it, overgrown  
With simple flowers : let there nothing be  
More boisterous than a lover's bended knee ;  
Nought more ungentle than the placid look  
Of one who leans upon a closed book ;  
Nought more untroubled than the grassy slopes  
Between two hills. All hail delightful hopes !  
As she was wont, th' imagination  
Into most lovely labyrinths will be gone,



And they shall be accounted poet kings  
Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.  
O may these joys be ripe before I die.

Will not some say that I presumptuously  
Have spoken? that from hastening disgrace  
'Twere better far to hide my foolish face?  
That whining boyhood should with reverence bow  
Ere the dread thunderbolt could reach? How!  
If I do hide myself, it sure shall be  
In the very fane, the light of Poesy:  
If I do fall, at least I will be laid  
Beneath the silence of a poplar shade;  
And over me the grass shall be smooth shaven;  
And there shall be a kind memorial graven.  
But off Despondence! miserable bane!  
They should not know thee, who athirst to gain  
A noble end, are thirsty every hour.  
What though I am not wealthy in the dower  
Of spanning wisdom; though I do not know  
The shiftings of the mighty winds that blow  
Hither and thither all the changing thoughts  
Of man: though no great minist'ring reason sorts  
Out the dark mysteries of human souls  
To clear conceiving: yet there ever rolls  
A vast idea before me, and I glean  
Therefrom my liberty; thence too I've seen  
The end and aim of Poesy. 'Tis clear  
As anything most true; as that the year  
Is made of the four seasons—manifest  
As a large cross, some old cathedral's crest,  
Lifted to the white clouds. Therefore should I  
Be but the essence of deformity,

A coward, did my very eye-lids wink  
 At speaking out what I have dar'd to think.  
 Ah! rather let me like a madman run  
 Over some precipice ; let the hot sun  
 Melt my Dedalian wings, and drive me down  
 Convuls'd and headlong ! Stay ! an inward frown  
 Of conscience bids me be more calm awhile.  
 An ocean dim, sprinkled with many an isle,  
 Spreads awfully before me. How much toil !  
 How many days ! what desperate turmoil !  
 Ere I can have explored its widenesses.  
 Ah, what a task ! upon my bended knees,  
 I could unsay those—no, impossible !  
 Impossible !

For sweet relief I'll dwell

On humbler thoughts, and let this strange assay  
 Begun in gentleness die so away.  
 E'en now all tumult from my bosom fades :  
 I turn full hearted to the friendly aids  
 That smooth the path of honour ; brotherhood,  
 And friendliness the nurse of mutual good.  
 The hearty grasp that sends a pleasant sonnet  
 Into the brain ere one can think upon it ;  
 The silence when some rhymes are coming out ;  
 And when they're come, the very pleasant rout :  
 The message certain to be done to-morrow.  
 'Tis perhaps as well that it should be to borrow  
 Some precious book from out its snug retreat,  
 To cluster round it when we next shall meet.  
 Scarce can I scribble on ; for lovely airs  
 Are fluttering round the room like doves in  
 pairs ;

Many delights of that glad day recalling,  
When first my senses caught their tender falling.  
And with these airs come forms of elegance  
Stooping their shoulders o'er a horse's prance,  
Careless, and grand—fingers soft and round  
Parting luxuriant curls ;—and the swift bound  
Of Bacchus from his chariot, when his eye  
Made Ariadne's cheek look blushingly.  
Thus I remember all the pleasant flow  
Of words at opening a portfolio.

Things such as these are ever harbingers  
To trains of peaceful images : the stirs  
Of a swan's neck unseen among the rushes :  
A linnet starting all about the bushes :  
A butterfly, with golden wings broad parted,  
Nestling a rose, convuls'd as though it smarted  
With over pleasure—many, many more,  
Might I indulge at large in all my store  
Of luxuries : yet I must not forget  
Sleep, quiet with his poppy coronet :  
For what there may be worthy in these rhymes  
I partly owe to him : and thus, the chimes  
Of friendly voices had just given place  
To as sweet a silence, when I 'gan retrace  
The pleasant day, upon a couch at ease.  
It was a poet's house who keeps the keys  
Of pleasure's temple. Round about were hung  
The glorious features of the bards who sung  
In other ages—cold and sacred busts  
Smiled at each other. Happy he who trusts  
To clear Futurity his darling fame !  
Then there were fauns and satyrs taking aim

At swelling apples with a frisky leap  
 And reaching fingers, 'mid a luscious heap  
 Of vine-leaves. Then there rose to view a fane  
 Of liny marble, and thereto a train  
 Of nymphs approaching fairly o'er the sward :  
 One, loveliest, holding her white hand toward  
 The dazzling sun-rise : two sisters sweet  
 Bending their graceful figures till they meet  
 Over the trippings of a little child :  
 And some are hearing, eagerly, the wild  
 Thrilling liquidity of dewy piping.  
 See, in another picture, nymphs are wiping  
 Cherishingly Diana's timorous limbs ;—  
 A fold of lawny mantle dabbling swims  
 At the bath's edge, and keeps a gentle motion  
 With the subsiding crystal : as when ocean  
 Heaves calmly its broad swelling smoothness o'er  
 Its rocky marge, and balances once more  
 The patient weeds ; that now unshent by foam  
 Feel all about their undulating home.

Sappho's meek head was there half smiling down  
 At nothing ; just as though the earnest frown  
 Of over thinking had that moment gone  
 From off her brow, and left her all alone.

Great Alfred's too, with anxious, pitying eyes,  
 As if he always listened to the sighs  
 Of the goaded world ; and Kosciusko's worn  
 By horrid suffrance—mightily forlorn.

Petrarch, outstepping from the shady green,  
 Starts at the sight of Laura ; nor can wean

His eyes from her sweet face. Most happy they !  
 For over them was seen a free display  
 Of out-spread wings, and from between them shone  
 The face of Poesy : from off her throne  
 She overlook'd things that I scarce could tell.  
 The very sense of where I was might well  
 Keep Sleep aloof : but more than that there came  
 Thought after thought to nourish up the flame  
 Within my breast ; so that the morning light  
 Surprised me even from a sleepless night ;  
 And up I rose refresh'd, and glad, and gay,  
 Resolving to begin that very day  
 These lines ; and howsoever they be done,  
 I leave them as a father does his son.

## TO CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE

**O**FT have you seen a swan superbly frowning,  
 And with proud breast his own white shadow  
 crowning ;  
 He slants his neck beneath the waters bright  
 So silently, it seems a beam of light  
 Come from the galaxy : anon he sports,—  
 With outspread wings the Naiad Zephyr courts,  
 Or ruffles all the surface of the lake  
 In striving from its crystal face to take  
 Some diamond water drops, and them to treasure  
 In milky nest, and sip them off at leisure.  
 But not a moment can he there insure them,  
 Nor to such downy rest can he allure them ;  
 For down they rush as though they would be free,  
 And drop like hours into eternity.

Just like that bird am I in loss of time,  
Whene'er I venture on the stream of rhyme ;  
With shatter'd boat, oar snapt, and canvas rent,  
I slowly sail, scarce knowing my intent ;  
Still scooping up the water with my fingers,  
In which a trembling diamond never lingers.  
By this, friend Charles, you may full plainly see  
Why I have never penn'd a line to thee :  
Because my thoughts were never free, and clear,  
And little fit to please a classic ear ;  
Because my wine was of too poor a savour  
For one whose palate gladdens in the flavour  
Of sparkling Helicon :—small good it were  
To take him to a desert rude, and bare,  
Who had on Baiæ's shore reclin'd at ease,  
While Tasso's page was floating in a breeze  
That gave soft music from Armida's bowers,  
Mingled with fragrance from her rarest flowers :  
Small good to one who had by Mulla's stream  
Fondled the maidens with the breasts of cream ;  
Who had beheld Belphœbe in a brook,  
And lovely Una in a leafy nook,  
And Archimago leaning o'er his book :  
Who had of all that's sweet tasted, and seen,  
From silv'ry ripple, up to beauty's queen ;  
From the sequester'd haunts of gay Titania,  
To the blue dwelling of divine Urania :  
One, who, of late, had ta'en sweet forest walks  
With him who elegantly chats, and talks—  
The wrong'd Libertas,—who has told you stories  
Of laurel chaplets, and Apollo's glories ;  
Of troops chivalrous prancing through a city,  
And tearful ladies made for love, and pity :



With many else which I have never known.  
 Thus have I thought ; and days on days have flown  
 Slowly, or rapidly—unwilling still  
 For you to try my dull, unlearned quill.  
 Nor should I now, but that I've known you long ;  
 That you first taught me all the sweets of song :  
 The grand, the sweet, the terse, the free, the fine ;  
 What swell'd with pathos, and what right divine :  
 Spenserian vowels that elope with ease,  
 And float along like birds o'er summer seas ;  
 Miltonian storms, and more, Miltonian tenderness ;  
 Michael in arms, and more, meek Eve's fair slender-  
     ness.

Who read for me the sonnet swelling loudly  
 Up to its climax and then dying proudly ?  
 Who found for me the grandeur of the ode,  
 Growing, like Atlas, stronger from its load ?  
 Who let me taste that more than cordial dram,  
 The sharp, the rapier-pointed epigram ?  
 Show'd me that epic was of all the king,  
 Round, vast, and spanning all like Saturn's ring ?  
 You too upheld the veil from Clio's beauty,  
 And pointed out the patriot's stern duty ;  
 The might of Alfred, and the shaft of Tell ;  
 The hand of Brutus, that so grandly fell  
 Upon a tyrant's head. Ah ! had I never seen,  
 Or known your kindness, what might I have been ?  
 What my enjoyments in my youthful years,  
 Bereft of all that now my life endears ?  
 And can I e'er these benefits forget ?  
 And can I e'er repay the friendly debt ?  
 No, doubly no ;—yet should these rhymings please,  
 I shall roll on the grass with two-fold ease :

For I have long time been my fancy feeding  
With hopes that you would one day think the reading  
Of my rough verses not an hour misspent ;  
Should it e'er be so, what a rich content !  
Some weeks have pass'd since last I saw the spires  
In lucent Thames reflected :—warm desires  
To see the sun o'erpeep the eastern dimness,  
And morning shadows streaking into slimness  
Across the lawny fields, and pebbly water ;  
To mark the time as they grow broad, and shorter ;  
To feel the air that plays about the hills,  
And sips its freshness from the little rills ;  
To see high, golden corn wave in the light  
When Cynthia smiles upon a summer's night,  
And peers among the cloudlets jet and white,  
As though she were reclining in a bed  
Of bean blossoms, in heaven freshly shed.  
No sooner had I stepp'd into these pleasures  
Than I began to think of rhymes and measures :  
The air that floated by me seem'd to say  
' Write ! thou wilt never have a better day.'  
And so I did. When many lines I'd written,  
Though with their grace I was not oversmitten,  
Yet, as my hand was warm, I thought I'd better  
Trust to my feelings, and write you a letter.  
Such an attempt requir'd an inspiration  
Of a peculiar sort,—a consummation ;—  
Which, had I felt, these scribblings might have been  
Verses from which the soul would never wean :  
But many days have passed since last my heart  
Was warm'd, luxuriously by divine Mozart ;  
By Arne delighted, or by Handel madden'd ;  
Or by the song of Erin pierc'd and sadden'd :

What time you were before the music sitting,  
 And the rich notes to each sensation fitting.  
 Since I have walk'd with you through shady lanes  
 That freshly terminate in open plains,  
 And revel'd in a chat that ceased not  
 When at night-fall among your books we got :  
 No, nor when supper came, nor after that,—  
 Nor when reluctantly I took my hat ;  
 No, nor till cordially you shook my hand  
 Mid-way between our homes :—your accents bland  
 Still sounded in my ears, when I no more  
 Could hear your footsteps touch the grav'ly floor.  
 Sometimes I lost them, and then found again ;  
 You chang'd the footpath for the grassy plain.  
 In those still moments I have wish'd you joys  
 That well you know to honor :—‘ Life's very toys  
 With him,’ said I, ‘ will take a pleasant charm ;  
 It cannot be that ought will work him harm.’  
 These thoughts now come o'er me with all their  
     might :—  
 Again I shake your hand,—friend Charles, good night.

*September 1816.*

EPISTLE TO JOHN HAMILTON  
REYNOLDS

**D**EAR Reynolds! as last night I lay in bed,  
 There came before my eyes that wonted thread  
 Of shapes, and shadows, and remembrances,  
 That every other minute vex and please :  
 Things all disjointed come from north and south,—  
 Two Witch's eyes above a Cherub's mouth,

Voltaire with casque and shield and habergeon,  
 And Alexander with his nightcap on ;  
 Old Socrates a-tying his cravat,  
 And Hazlitt playing with Miss Edgeworth's cat ;  
 And Junius Brutus, pretty well so so,  
 Making the best of's way towards Soho.

Few are there who escape these visitings,—  
 Perhaps one or two whose lives have patent wings,  
 And thro' whose curtains peeps no hellish nose,  
 No wild-boar tushes, and no Mermaid's toes ;  
 But flowers bursting out with lusty pride,  
 And young Æolian harps personify'd ;  
 Some Titian colours touch'd into real life,—  
 The sacrifice goes on ; the pontiff knife  
 Gleams in the Sun, the milk-white heifer lows,  
 The pipes go shrilly, the libation flows :  
 A white sail shows above the green-head cliff,  
 Moves round the point, and throws her anchor stiff ;  
 The mariners join hymn with those on land.

You know the Enchanted Castle,—it doth stand  
 Upon a rock, on the border of a Lake,  
 Nested in trees, which all do seem to shake  
 From some old magic-like Urganda's Sword.  
 O Phœbus ! that I had thy sacred word  
 To show this Castle, in fair dreaming wise,  
 Unto my friend, while sick and ill he lies !

You know it well enough, where it doth seem  
 A mossy place, a Merlin's Hall, a dream ;  
 You know the clear Lake, and the little Isles,  
 The mountains blue, and cold near neighbour rills,

All which elsewhere are but half animate ;  
 There do they look alive to love and hate,  
 To smiles and frowns ; they seem a lifted mound  
 Above some giant, pulsing underground.

Part of the Building was a chosen See,  
 Built by a banish'd Santon of Chaldee ;  
 The other part, two thousand years from him,  
 Was built by Cuthbert de Saint Aldebrim,  
 Then there's a little wing, far from the Sun,  
 Built by a Lapland Witch turn'd maudlin Nun ;  
 And many other juts of aged stone  
 Founded with many a mason-devil's groan.

The doors all look as if they op'd themselves,  
 The windows as if latch'd by Fays and Elves,  
 And from them comes a silver flash of light,  
 As from the westward of a Summer's night ;  
 Or like a beauteous woman's large blue eyes  
 Gone mad thro' olden songs and poesies.

See ! what is coming from the distance dim !  
 A golden Galley all in silken trim !  
 Three rows of oars are lightening, moment whiles,  
 Into the verd'rous bosoms of those isles ;  
 Towards the shade, under the Castle wall,  
 It comes in silence,—now 'tis hidden all.  
 The Clarion sounds, and from a Postern-gate  
 An echo of sweet music doth create  
 A fear in the poor Herdsman, who doth bring  
 His beasts to trouble the enchanted spring,—  
 He tells of the sweet music, and the spot,  
 To all his friends, and they believe him not.



O that our dreamings all, of sleep or wake,  
Would all their colours from the sunset take :  
From something of material sublime,  
Rather than shadow our own soul's day-time  
In the dark void of night. For in the world  
We jostle,—but my flag is not unfurl'd  
On the Admiral-staff,—and so philosophize  
I dare not yet! Oh, never will the prize,  
High reason, and the love of good and ill,  
Be my award! Things cannot to the will  
Be settled, but they tease us out of thought ;  
Or is it that imagination brought  
Beyond its proper bound, yet still confin'd,  
Lost in a sort of Purgatory blind,  
Cannot refer to any standard law  
Of either earth or heaven? It is a flaw  
In happiness, to see beyond our bourn,—  
It forces us in summer skies to mourn,  
It spoils the singing of the Nightingale.

Dear Reynolds! I have a mysterious tale,  
And cannot speak it: the first page I read  
Upon a Lampit rock of green sea-weed  
Among the breakers; 'twas a quiet eve,  
The rocks were silent, the wide sea did weave  
An untumultuous fringe of silver foam  
Along the flat brown sand; I was at home  
And should have been most happy,—but I saw  
Too far into the sea, where every maw  
The greater on the less feeds evermore.—  
But I saw too distinct into the core  
Of an eternal fierce destruction,  
And so from happiness I far was gone.



Still am I sick of it, and tho', to-day,  
I've gather'd young spring-leaves, and flowers gay  
Of periwinkle and wild strawberry,  
Still do I that most fierce destruction see,—  
The Shark at savage prey,—the Hawk at pounce,—  
The gentle Robin, like a Pard or Ounce,  
Ravening a worm,—Away, ye horrid moods !  
Moods of one's mind ! You know I hate them well.  
You know I'd sooner be a clapping Bell  
To some Kamtschatcan Missionary Church,  
Than with these horrid moods be left i' the lurch.

*March 25, 1818.*

## FRAGMENT OF 'THE CASTLE-BUILDER'

**T**O-NIGHT I'll have my friar—let me think  
About my room,—I'll have it in the pink ;  
It should be rich and sombre, and the moon,  
Just in its mid-life in the midst of June,  
Should look thro' four large windows and display  
Clear, but for gold-fish vases in the way,  
Their glassy diamonding on Turkish floor ;  
The tapers keep aside, an hour and more,  
To see what else the moon alone can show ;  
While the night-breeze doth softly let us know  
My terrace is well bower'd with oranges.  
Upon the floor the dullest spirit sees  
A guitar-ribband and a lady's glove  
Beside a crumple-leaved tale of love ;  
A tambour-frame, with Venus sleeping there,  
All finish'd but some ringlets of her hair ;

A viol-bow, strings torn, cross-wise upon  
A glorious folio of Anacreon ;  
A skull upon a mat of roses lying,  
Ink'd purple with a song concerning dying ;  
An hour-glass on the turn, amid the trails  
Of passion-flower ;—just in time there sails  
A cloud across the moon,—the lights bring in !  
And see what more my phantasy can win.  
It is a gorgeous room, but somewhat sad ;  
The draperies are so, as tho' they had  
Been made for Cleopatra's winding-sheet ;  
And opposite the stedfast eye doth meet  
A spacious looking-glass, upon whose face,  
In letters raven-sombre, you may trace  
Old ' Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.'  
Greek busts and statuary have ever been  
Held, by the finest spirits, fitter far  
Than vase grotesque and Siamesian jar ;  
Therefore 'tis sure a want of Attic taste  
That I should rather love a Gothic waste  
Of eyesight on cinque-coloured potter's clay,  
Than on the marble fairness of old Greece.  
My table-coverlids of Jason's fleece  
And black Numidian sheep-wool should be wrought,  
Gold, black, and heavy, from the Llama brought.  
My ebon sofas should delicious be  
With down from Leda's cygnet progeny.  
My pictures ail Salvator's, save a few  
Of Titian's portraiture, and one, though new,  
Of Haydon's in its fresh magnificence.  
My wine—O good ! 'tis here at my desire,  
And I must sit to supper with my friar.

## SONGS, &c.

### A SONG OF OPPOSITES

' Under the flag  
Of each his faction, they to battle bring  
Their embryon atoms.'—MILTON.

WELCOME joy, and welcome sorrow,  
Lethe's weed and Hermes' feather ;  
Come to-day, and come to-morrow,  
I do love you both together !  
I love to mark sad faces in fair weather ;  
And hear a merry laugh amid the thunder ;  
Fair and foul I love together.  
Meadows sweet where flames are under,  
And a giggle at a wonder ;  
Visage sage at pantomime ;  
Funeral, and steeple-chime ;  
Infant playing with a skull ;  
Morning fair, and shipwreck'd hull ;  
Nightshade with the woodbine kissing ;  
Serpents in red roses hissing ;  
Cleopatra regal-dress'd  
With the aspic at her breast ;  
Dancing music, music sad,  
Both together, sane and mad ;  
Muses bright and muses pale ;  
Sombre Saturn, Momus hale ;—

Laugh and sigh, and laugh again ;  
 Oh the sweetness of the pain !  
 Muses bright, and muses pale,  
 Bare your faces of the veil ;  
 Let me see ; and let me write  
 Of the day, and of the night—  
 Both together :—let me slake  
 All my thirst for sweet heart-ache !  
 Let my bower be of yew,  
 Interwreath'd with myrtles new ;  
 Pines and lime-trees full in bloom,  
 And my couch a low grass-tomb.

? 1818.

### I HAD A DOVE

**I** HAD a dove and the sweet dove died ;  
 And I have thought it died of grieving :  
 O, what could it grieve for? Its feet were tied,  
 With a silken thread of my own hand's weaving.  
 Sweet little red feet ! why should you die—  
 Why should you leave me, sweet bird, why?  
 You liv'd alone in the forest-tree,  
 Why, pretty thing ! would you not live with me?  
 I kiss'd you oft and gave you white peas ;  
 Why not live sweetly, as in the green trees?

### STANZAS

**I**N a drear-nighted December,  
 Too happy, happy tree,  
 Thy branches ne'er remember  
 Their green felicity :

The north cannot undo them,  
 With a sleety whistle through them ;  
 Nor frozen thawings glue them  
 From budding at the prime.

In a drear-nighted December,  
 Too happy, happy brook,  
 Thy bubblings ne'er remember  
 Apollo's summer look ;  
 But with a sweet forgetting,  
 They stay their crystal fretting,  
 Never, never petting  
 About the frozen time.

Ah ! would 'twere so with many  
 A gentle girl and boy !  
 But were there ever any  
 Writh'd not at passed joy ?  
 To know the change and feel it,  
 When there is none to heal it,  
 Nor numbed sense to steel it,  
 Was never said in rhyme.

*October or December 1818.*

## ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

**M**Y heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk :

'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
 But being too happy in thine happiness,—  
 That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,  
 In some melodious plot  
 Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
 Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage ! that hath been  
 Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
 Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
 Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth !  
 O for a beaker full of the warm South,  
 Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
 And purple-stained mouth ;  
 That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
 And with thee fade away into the forest dim :

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;  
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,  
 Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies ;  
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
 And leaden-ey'd despairs,  
 Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
 Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away ! away ! for I will fly to thee,  
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
 But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :



Already with thee! tender is the night,  
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays ;  
But here there is no light,  
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy  
ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;  
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves ;  
And mid-May's eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen ; and, for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
Call'd him soft names in many a muséd rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath ;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy !  
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !  
No hungry generations tread thee down ;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown :

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;  
 The same that oft-times hath  
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell  
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self !  
 Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
 As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.  
 Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades  
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
 Up the hill-side ; and now 'tis buried deep  
 In the next valley-glades :  
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream ?  
 Fled is that music :—Do I wake or sleep ?  
*May 1819.*

### ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

**T**HOU still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
 Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme :  
 What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady ?  
 What men or gods are these ? What maidens loth ?  
 What mad pursuit ? What struggle to escape ?  
 What pipes and timbrels ? What wild ecstasy ?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter ; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on ;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone :  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare ;  
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve ;  
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair !

Ah, happy, happy boughs ! that cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu ;  
And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
For ever piping songs for ever new ;  
More happy love ! more happy, happy love !  
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,  
For ever panting, and for ever young ;  
All breathing human passion far above,  
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,  
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice ?  
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest ?  
What little town by river or sea shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn ?  
And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
Will silent be ; and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape ! Fair attitude ! with brede  
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
 With forest branches and the trodden weed ;  
 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
 As doth eternity : Cold Pastoral !

When old age shall this generation waste,  
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,'—that is all  
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

*Spring 1819.*

### ODE TO PSYCHE

O GODDESS ! hear these tuneless numbers,  
 wrung

By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,  
 And pardon that thy secrets should be sung  
 Even into thine own soft-conched ear :  
 Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see  
 The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes ?  
 I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,  
 And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,  
 Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side  
 In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof  
 Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran  
 A brooklet, scarce espied :

Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,  
 Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,  
 They lay calm-breathing, on the bedded grass ;

Their arms embraced, and their pinions too ;  
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,  
As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,  
And ready still past kisses to outnumber  
At tender eye-dawn of aureorean love :  
The winged boy I knew ;  
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove ?  
His Psyche true !

O latest born and loveliest vision far  
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy !  
Fairer than Phœbe's sapphire-region'd star,  
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky ;  
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,  
Nor altar heap'd with flowers ;  
Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan  
Upon the midnight hours ;  
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet  
From chain-swung censer teeming ;  
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat  
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest ! though too late for antique vows,  
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,  
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,  
Holy the air, the water, and the fire ;  
Yet even in these days so far retir'd  
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,  
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,  
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspir'd.  
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan  
Upon the midnight hours ;

Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet  
 From swung censer teeming ;  
 Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat  
 Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane  
 In some untrodden region of my mind,  
 Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant  
 pain,  
 Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind :  
 Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees  
 Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep ;  
 And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,  
 The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep ;  
 And in the midst of this wide quietness  
 A rosy sanctuary will I dress  
 With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,  
 With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,  
 With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,  
 Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same :  
 And there shall be for thee all soft delight  
 That shadowy thought can win,  
 A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,  
 To let the warm Love in !

*April 1819.*

## FANCY

EVER let the Fancy roam,  
 Pleasure never is at home :  
 At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,  
 Like to bubbles when rain pelteth ;



Then let winged Fancy wander  
Through the thought still spread beyond  
her :

Open wide the mind's cage-door,  
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.  
O sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;  
Summer's joys are spoilt by use,  
And the enjoying of the Spring  
Fades as does its blossoming ;  
Autumn's red-lipp'd fruitage too,  
Blushing through the mist and dew,  
Cloys with tasting : What do then ?  
Sit thee by the ingle, when  
The sear faggot blazes bright,  
Spirit of a winter's night ;  
When the soundless earth is muffled,  
And the caked snow is shuffled  
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon ;  
When the Night doth meet the Noon  
In a dark conspiracy  
To banish Even from her sky.  
Sit thee there, and send abroad,  
With a mind self-overaw'd,  
Fancy, high-commission'd :—send her !  
She has vassals to attend her :  
She will bring, in spite of frost,  
Beauties that the earth hath lost ;  
She will bring thee, all together,  
All delights of summer weather ;  
All the buds and bells of May,  
From dewy sward or thorny spray ;  
All the heaped Autumn's wealth,  
With a still, mysterious stealth :

She will mix these pleasures up  
Like three fit wines in a cup,  
And thou shalt quaff it :—thou shalt hear  
Distant harvest-carols clear ;  
Rustle of the reaped corn ;  
Sweet birds antheming the morn :  
And, in the same moment—hark !  
'Tis the early April lark,  
Or the rooks, with busy caw,  
Foraging for sticks and straw.  
Thou shalt, at one glance, behold  
The daisy and the marigold ;  
White-plum'd lillies, and the first  
Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst ;  
Shaded hyacinth, alway  
Sapphire queen of the mid-May ;  
And every leaf, and every flower  
Pearled with the self-same shower.  
Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep  
Meagre from its celled sleep ;  
And the snake all winter-thin  
Cast on sunny bank its skin ;  
Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see  
Hatching in the hawthorn-tree,  
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest  
Quiet on her mossy nest ;  
Then the hurry and alarm  
When the bee-hive casts its swarm ;  
Acorns ripe down-pattering,  
While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy ! let her loose ;  
Every thing is spoilt by use :

Where's the cheek that doth not fade,  
To much gaz'd at? Where's the maid  
Whose lip mature is ever new?  
Where's the eye, however blue,  
Doth not weary? Where's the face  
One would meet in every place?  
Where's the voice, however soft,  
One would hear so very oft?  
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth  
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.  
Let, then, winged Fancy find  
Thee a mistress to thy mind:  
Dulcet-ey'd as Ceres' daughter,  
Ere the God of Torment taught her  
How to frown and how to chide;  
With a waist and with a side  
White as Hebe's, when her zone  
Slipt its golden clasp, and down  
Fell her kirtle to her feet,  
While she held the goblet sweet,  
And Jove grew languid.—Break the mesh  
Of the Fancy's silken leash;  
Quickly break her prison-string  
And such joys as these she'll bring.—  
Let the winged Fancy roam,  
Pleasure never is at home.

*Winter 1818-19.*

## ODE

[WRITTEN ON THE BLANK PAGE BEFORE BEAUMONT  
AND FLETCHER'S TRAGI-COMEDY 'THE FAIR MAID  
OF THE INN.']

**B**ARDS of Passion and of Mirth,  
Ye have left your souls on earth!  
Have ye souls in heaven too,  
Double-liv'd in regions new?  
Yes, and those of heaven commune  
With the spheres of sun and moon;  
With the noise of fountains wond'rous,  
And the parle of voices thund'rous;  
With the whisper of heaven's trees  
And one another, in soft ease  
Seated on Elysian lawns  
Brows'd by none but Dian's fawns;  
Underneath large blue-bells tented,  
Where the daisies are rose-scented,  
And the rose herself has got  
Perfume which on earth is not;  
Where the nightingale doth sing  
Not a senseless, tranced thing,  
But divine melodious truth;  
Philosophic numbers smooth;  
Tales and golden histories  
Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then  
On the earth ye live again;

And the souls ye left behind you  
 Teach us, here, the way to find you,  
 Where your other souls are joying,  
 Never slumber'd, never cloying.  
 Here, your earth-born souls still speak  
 To mortals, of their little week ;  
 Of their sorrows and delights ;  
 Of their passions and their spites ;  
 Of their glory and their shame ;  
 What doth strengthen and what maim.  
 Thus ye teach us, every day,  
 Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,  
 Ye have left your souls on earth !  
 Ye have souls in heaven too,  
 Double-liv'd in regions new !

*January 1819.*

LINES ON THE MERMAID TAVERN

**S**OULS of Poets dead and gone,  
 What Elysium have ye known,  
 Happy field or mossy cavern,  
 Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern ?  
 Have ye tippled drink more fine  
 Than mine host's Canary wine ?  
 Or are fruits of Paradise  
 Sweeter than those dainty pies  
 Of venison ? O generous food !  
 Drest as though bold Robin Hood

Would, with his maid Marian,  
Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day  
Mine host's sign-board flew away,  
Nobody knew whither, till  
An astrologer's old quill  
To a sheepskin gave the story,  
Said he saw you in your glory,  
Underneath a new old sign  
Sipping beverage divine,  
And pledging with contented smack  
The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of Poets dead and gone,  
What Elysium have ye known,  
Happy field or mossy cavern,  
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

*February 1818.*

## ROBIN HOOD

TO A FRIEND

**N**O! those days are gone away,  
And their hours are old and gray,  
And their minutes buried all  
Under the down-trodden pall  
Of the leaves of many years:  
Many times have winter's shears,  
Frozen North, and chilling East,  
Sounded tempests to the feast



Of the forest's whispering fleeces,  
Since men knew nor rent nor leases.

No, the bugle sounds no more,  
And the twanging bow no more ;  
Silent is the ivory shrill  
Past the heath and up the hill ;  
There is no mid-forest laugh,  
Where lone Echo gives the half  
To some wight, amaz'd to hear  
Jesting, deep in forest drear.

On the fairest time of June  
You may go, with sun or moon,  
Or the seven stars to light you,  
Or the polar ray to right you ;  
But you never may behold  
Little John, or Robin bold ;  
Never one, of all the clan,  
Thrumming on an empty can  
Some old hunting ditty, while  
He doth his green way beguile  
To fair hostess Merriment,  
Down beside the pasture Trent ;  
For he left the merry tale  
Messenger for spicy ale.

Gone, the merry morris din ;  
Gone, the song of Gamelyn ;  
Gone, the tough-belted outlaw  
Idling in the 'grenè shawe' ;  
All are gone away and past !  
And if Robin should be cast

Sudden from his turfed grave,  
 And if Marian should have  
 Once again her forest days,  
 She would weep, and he would craze :  
 He would swear, for all his oaks,  
 Fall'n beneath the dockyard strokes,  
 Have rotted on the briny seas ;  
 She would weep that her wild bees  
 Sang not to her—strange ! that honey  
 Can't be got without hard money !

So it is : yet let us sing,  
 Honour to the old bow-string !  
 Honour to the bugle-horn !  
 Honour to the woods unshorn !  
 Honour to the Lincoln green !  
 Honour to the archer keen !  
 Honour to tight little John,  
 And the horse he rode upon !  
 Honour to bold Robin Hood,  
 Sleeping in the underwood !  
 Honour to maid Marian,  
 And to all the Sherwood-clan !  
 Though their days have hurried by  
 Let us two a burden try.

*February 1818.*

## TO AUTUMN

**S**EASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun ;  
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run ;



on a half-sown d furrow round asleep  
Incessant with the time of poppies, while they look  
Spaced for next growth and all its twined flowers

TO AUTUMN



To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core ;  
    To swell the gourd, and piump the hazel shells  
    With a sweet kernel ; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
    For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?  
    Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
    Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind ;  
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
    Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
    Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers :  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
    Steady thy laden head across a brook ;  
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,  
    Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring ? Ay, where are they ?  
    Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—  
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
    And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue ;  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
    Among the river shallows, borne aloft  
    Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn ;  
    Hedge-crickets sing ; and now with treble soft  
    The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft ;  
    And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

*September 19, 1819.*

## ODE ON MELANCHOLY

**N**O, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist  
 Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous  
 wine ;  
 Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd  
 By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine ;  
 Make not your rosary of yew-berries,  
 Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be  
 Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl  
 A partner in your sorrow's mysteries ;  
 For shade to shade will come too drowsily,  
 And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall  
 Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,  
 That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,  
 And hides the green hill in an April shroud ;  
 Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,  
 Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,  
 Or on the wealth of globed peonies ;  
 Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,  
 Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,  
 And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die ;  
 And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips  
 Bidding adieu ; and aching Pleasure nigh,  
 Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips :



Ay, in the very temple of Delight  
 Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,  
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous  
 tongue  
 Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine ;  
 His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,  
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

*Spring 1819.*

FRAGMENT OF AN ODE TO MAIA,  
 WRITTEN ON MAY DAY 1818

**M**OTHER of Hermes ! and still youthful Maia !  
 May I sing to thee  
 As thou wast hymned on the shores of Baiaë ?  
 Or may I woo thee  
 In earlier Sicilian ? or thy smiles  
 Seek as they once were sought, in Grecian isles,  
 By bards who died content on pleasant sward,  
 Leaving great verse unto a little clan ?  
 O, give me their great vigour, and unheard  
 Save of the quiet Primrose, and the span  
 Of heaven and few ears,  
 Rounded by thee, my song should die away  
 Content as theirs,  
 Rich in the simple worship of a day.

## HYMN TO APOLLO

**G**OD of the golden bow,  
 And of the golden lyre,  
 And of the golden hair,  
     And of the golden fire,  
         Charioteer  
         Of the patient year,  
         Where—where slept thine ire,  
 When like a blank idiot I put on thy wreath,  
     Thy laurel, thy glory,  
     The light of thy story,  
 Or was I a worm—too low crawling, for death?  
     O Delphic Apollo!

The Thunderer grasp'd and grasp'd,  
     The Thunderer frown'd and frown'd;  
 The eagle's feathery mane  
     For wrath became stiffen'd—the sound  
         Of breeding thunder  
         Went drowsily under,  
         Muttering to be unbound.  
 O why didst thou pity, and for a worm  
     Why touch thy soft lute  
     Till the thunder was mute,  
 Why was not I crush'd—such a pitiful germ?  
     O Delphic Apollo!

The Pleiades were up,  
     Watching the silent air;  
 The seeds and roots in the Earth  
     Were swelling for summer fare;

The Ocean, its neighbour,  
 Was at its old labour,  
 When, who—who did dare  
 To tie, like a madman, thy plant round his brow,  
 And grin and look proudly,  
 And blaspheme so loudly,  
 And live for that honour, to stoop to thee now?  
 O Delphic Apollo!

*February 1815.*

## THE POET

## A FRAGMENT

WHERE'S the Poet? show him! show him,  
 Muses nine! that I may know him!  
 'Tis the man who with a man  
 Is an equal, be he King,  
 Or poorest of the beggar-clan,  
 Or any other wondrous thing  
 A man may be 'twixt ape and Plato;  
 'Tis the man who with a bird,  
 Wren or Eagle, finds his way to  
 All its instincts; he hath heard  
 The Lion's roaring, and can tell  
 What his horny throat expresseth,  
 And to him the Tiger's yell  
 Comes articulate and presseth  
 On his ear like mother-tongue.

1818?

LINES ON SEEING A LOCK OF  
MILTON'S HAIR

CHIEF of organic numbers!  
 Old Scholar of the Spheres!  
 Thy spirit never slumbers,  
     But rolls about our ears,  
 For ever, and for ever!  
 O what a mad endeavour  
     Worketh he,  
 Who to thy sacred and ennobled hearse  
 Would offer a burnt sacrifice of verse  
     And melody.

How heavenward thou soundest,  
     Live Temple of sweet noise,  
 And Discord unconfoundest,  
     Giving Delight new joys,  
 And Pleasure nobler pinions!  
 O, where are thy dominions?  
     Lend thine ear  
 To a young Delian oath,—aye, by thy soul,  
 By all that from thy mortal lips did roll,  
 And by the kernel of thine earthly love,  
 Beauty, in things on earth, and things above  
     I swear!  
 When every childish fashion  
     Has vanished from my rhyme,  
 Will I, grey-gone in passion,  
     Leave to an after-time,

Hymning and harmony  
 Of thee, and of thy works, and of thy life ;  
 But vain is now the burning and the strife,  
 Pangs are in vain, until I grow high-rife  
     With old Philosophy,  
 And mad with glimpses of futurity.

For many years my offering must be hush'd ;  
     When I do speak, I'll think upon this hour,  
 Because I feel my forehead hot and flush'd,  
     Even at the simplest vassal of thy power,—  
     A lock of thy bright hair,—  
     Sudden it came,  
 And I was startled, when I caught thy name  
     Coupled so unaware ;  
 Yet, at the moment, temperate was my blood.  
 I thought I had beheld it from the flood.

*January 1818.*

## ODE TO FANNY

**P**HYSICIAN Nature ! let my spirit blood !  
     O ease my heart of verse and let me rest ;  
 Throw me upon thy Tripod, till the flood  
     Of stifling numbers ebbs from my full breast.  
 A theme ! a theme ! great nature ! give a theme ;  
     Let me begin my dream.  
 I come—I see thee, as thou standest there,  
 Beckon me not into the wintry air.

Ah ! dearest love, sweet home of all my fears,  
     And hopes, and joys, and panting miseries,—  
 To-night, if I may guess, thy beauty wears

A smile of such delight,  
 As brilliant and as bright,  
 As when with ravished, aching, vassal eyes,  
 Lost in soft amaze,  
 I gaze, I gaze!

Who now, with greedy looks, eats up my feast?  
 What stare outfaces now my silver moon!  
 Ah! keep that hand unravished at the least;  
     Let, let, the amorous burn—  
     But, pr'ythee, do not turn  
 The current of your heart from me so soon.  
     O! save, in charity,  
     The quickest pulse for me.

Save it for me, sweet love! though music breathe  
 Voluptuous visions into the warm air;  
 Though swimming through the dance's dangerous  
     wreath,  
     Be like an April day,  
     Smiling and cold and gay,  
 A temperate lilly, temperate as fair;  
     Then, Heaven! there will be  
     A warmer June for me.

Why, this—you'll say, my Fanny! is not true:  
 Put your soft hand upon your snowy side,  
 Where the heart beats: confess—'tis nothing new—  
     Must not a woman be  
     A feather on the sea,  
 Sway'd to and fro by every wind and tide?  
     Of as uncertain speed  
     As blow-ball from the mead?



I know it—and to know it is despair  
 To one who loves you as I love, sweet Fanny!  
 Whose heart goes fluttering for you everywhere,  
     Nor, when away you roam,  
     Dare keep its wretched home,  
 Love, love alone, his pains severe and many:  
     Then, loveliest! keep me free,  
     From torturing jealousy.

Ah! if you prize my subdu'd soul above  
 The poor, the fading, brief, pride of an hour;  
 Let none profane my Holy See of love,  
     Or with a rude hand break  
     The sacramental cake:  
 Let none else touch the just new-budded flower;  
     If not—may my eyes close,  
     Love! on their lost repose.

*Spring 1819.*

## LINES TO FANNY

**W**HAT can I do to drive away  
 Remembrance from my eyes? for they have  
 seen,  
 Aye, an hour ago, my brilliant Queen!  
 Touch has a memory. O say, love, say,  
 What can I do to kill it and be free  
 In my old liberty?  
 When every fair one that I saw was fair,  
 Enough to catch me in but half a snare,  
 Not keep me there:

When, howe'er poor or particolour'd things,  
 My muse had wings,  
 And ever ready was to take her course  
 Whither I bent her force,  
 Unintellectual, yet divine to me ;—  
 Divine, I say !—What sea-bird o'er the sea  
 Is a philosopher the while he goes  
 Winging along where the great water throes ?

How shall I do  
 To get anew  
 Those moulted feathers, and so mount once more  
 Above, above  
 The reach of fluttering Love,  
 And make him cower lowly while I soar ?  
 Shall I gulp wine ? No, that is vulgarism,  
 A heresy and schism,  
 Foisted into the canon law of love ;—  
 No,—wine is only sweet to happy men ;  
 More dismal cares  
 Seize on me unawares,—  
 Where shall I learn to get my peace again ?  
 To banish thoughts of that most hateful land,  
 Dungeoner of my friends, that wicked strand  
 Where they were wreck'd and live a wrecked life ;  
 That monstrous region, whose dull rivers pour,  
 Ever from their sordid urns unto the shore,  
 Unown'd of any weedy-haired gods ;  
 Whose winds, all zephyrless, hold scourging rods,  
 Ic'd in the great lakes, to afflict mankind ;  
 Whose rank-grown forests, frosted, black, and blind,  
 Would fright a Dryad ; whose harsh herbag'd meads  
 Make lean and lank the starv'd ox while he feeds ;

There bad flowers have no scent, birds no sweet song,  
And great unerring Nature once seems wrong.

O, for some sunny spell  
To dissipate the shadows of this hell !  
Say they are gone,—with the new dawning light  
Steps forth my lady bright !  
O, let me once more rest  
My soul upon that dazzling breast !  
Let once again these aching arms be plac'd,  
The tender gaolers of thy waist !  
And let me feel that warm breath here and there  
To spread a rapture in my very hair,—  
O, the sweetness of the pain !  
Give me those lips again !  
Enough ! Enough ! it is enough for me  
To dream of thee !

*October 1819.*

## ODE ON INDOLENCE

'They toil not, neither do they spin.'

ONE morn before me were three figures seen,  
With bowed necks, and joined hands, side-  
faced ;  
And one behind the other stepp'd serene,  
In placid sandals, and in white robes graced ;  
They pass'd, like figures on a marble urn,  
When shifted round to see the other side ;  
They came again ; as when the urn once more  
Is shifted round, the first seen shades return ;  
And they were strange to me, as may betide  
With vases, to one deep in Phidian lore.

How is it, Shadows! that I knew ye not?  
 How came ye muffled in so hush a mask?  
 Was it a silent deep-disguised plot  
 To steal away, and leave without a task  
 My idle days? Ripe was the drowsy hour;  
 The blissful cloud of summer-indolence  
 Benumb'd my eyes; my pulse grew less and less;  
 Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower:  
 O, why did ye not melt, and leave my sense  
 Unhaunted quite of all but—nothingness?

A third time pass'd they by, and, passing, turn'd  
 Each one the face a moment whiles to me;  
 Then faded, and to follow them I burn'd  
 And ach'd for wings because I knew the three;  
 The first was a fair Maid, and Love her name;  
 The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,  
 And ever watchful with fatigued eye;  
 The last, whom I love more, the more of blame  
 Is heap'd upon her, maiden most unmeek,—  
 I knew to be my demon Poesy.

They faded, and, forsooth! I wanted wings:  
 O folly! What is Love! and where is it?  
 And for that poor Ambition! it springs  
 From a man's little heart's short fever-fit;  
 For Poesy!—no,—she has not a joy,—  
 At least for me,—so sweet as drowsy noons,  
 And evenings steep'd in honied indolence;  
 O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy,  
 That I may never know how change the moons,  
 Or hear the voice of busy common-sense!

And once more came they by ;—alas ! wherefore ?  
My sleep had been embroider'd with dim dreams ;  
My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er  
With flowers, and stirring shades, and baffled  
beams :  
The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,  
Tho' in her lids hung the sweet tears of May ;  
The open casement press'd a new-leav'd vine,  
Let in the budding warmth and throstle's lay ;  
O Shadows ! 'twas a time to bid farewell !  
Upon your skirts had fallen no tears of mine.

So, ye three Ghosts, adieu ! Ye cannot raise  
My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass ;  
For I would not be dieted with praise,  
A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce !  
Fade softly from my eyes, and be once more  
In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn ;  
Farewell ! I yet have visions for the night,  
And for the day faint visions there is store ;  
Vanish, ye Phantoms ! from my idle spright,  
Into the clouds, and never more return !

1819.

## SONNETS

### 'WHY DID I LAUGH TO-NIGHT?'

WHY did I laugh to-night? No voice will tell :  
No God, no Demon of severe response,  
Deigns to reply from Heaven or from Hell.  
Then to my human heart I turn at once.  
Heart! Thou and I are here sad and alone ;  
I say, why did I laugh? O mortal pain!  
O Darkness! Darkness! ever must I moan,  
To question Heaven and Hell and Heart in vain.  
Why did I laugh? I know this Being's lease,  
My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads ;  
Yet would I on this very midnight cease,  
And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds ;  
Verse, Fame, and Beauty are intense indeed,  
But death intenser—Death is Life's high meed.

*March 1819.*

### A DREAM, AFTER READING DANTE'S EPISODE OF PAULO AND FRANCESCA

AS Hermes once took to his feathers light,  
When lulled Argus, baffled, swoon'd and slept,  
So on a Delphic reed, my idle spright  
So play'd, so charm'd, so conquer'd, so bereft



The dragon-world of all its hundred eyes ;  
 And, seeing it asleep, so fled away—  
 Not to pure Ida with its snow-cold skies,  
 Nor unto Tempe where Jove griev'd a day ;  
 But to that second circle of sad hell,  
 Where 'mid the gust, the whirlwind, and the flaw  
 Of rain and hail-stones, lovers need not tell  
 Their sorrows. Pale were the sweet lips I saw,  
 Pale were the lips I kiss'd, and fair the form  
 I floated with, about that melancholy storm.

*April 1819.*

## TWO SONNETS ON FAME

### I

**F**AME, like a wayward Girl, will still be coy  
 To those who woo her with too slavish knees,  
 But makes surrender to some thoughtless Boy,  
 And dotes the more upon a heart at ease ;  
 She is a Gipsy, will not speak to those  
 Who have not learnt to be content without her ;  
 A Jilt, whose ear was never whisper'd close,  
 Who thinks they scandal her who talk about her ;  
 A very Gipsy is she, Nilus-born,  
 Sister-in-law to jealous Potiphar ;  
 Ye love-sick Bards, repay her scorn for scorn,  
 Ye artists lovelorn, madmen that ye are !  
 Make your best bow to her and bid adieu,  
 Then, if she likes it, she will follow you.

## II

'You cannot eat your cake and have it too.'—*Proverb.*

HOW fever'd is the man, who cannot look  
 Upon his mortal days with temperate blood,  
 Who vexes all the leaves of his life's book,  
 And robs his fair name of its maidenhood ;  
 It is as if the rose should pluck herself,  
 Or the ripe plum finger its misty bloom,  
 As if a Naiad, like a meddling elf,  
 Should darken her pure grot with muddy gloom,  
 But the rose leaves herself upon the briar,  
 For winds to kiss and grateful bees to feed,  
 And the ripe plum still wears its dim attire,  
 The undisturbed lake has crystal space,  
 Why then should man, teasing the world for  
 grace,  
 Spoil his salvation for a fierce miscreed ?

*April 30, 1819.*

## ON THE SONNET

IF by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd,  
 And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet  
 Fetter'd, in spite of pained loveliness,  
 Let us find out, if we must be constrain'd,  
 Sandals more interwoven and complete  
 To fit the naked foot of Poesy :

Let us inspect the Lyre, and weigh the stress  
 Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd  
 By ear industrious, and attention meet :  
 Misers of sound and syllable, no less  
 Than Midas of his coinage, let us be  
 Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown ;  
 So, if we may not let the Muse be free,  
 She will be bound with garlands of her own.

*May 1819.*

ON LEIGH HUNT'S POEM 'THE STORY  
 OF RIMINI'

WHO loves to peer up at the morning sun,  
 With half-shut eyes and comfortable cheek,  
 Let him, with this sweet tale, full often seek  
 For meadows where the little rivers run ;  
 Who loves to linger with that brightest one  
 Of Heaven—Hesperus—let him lowly speak  
 These numbers to the night, and starlight meek,  
 Or moon, if that her hunting be begun.  
 He who knows these delights, and too is prone  
 To moralize upon a smile or tear,  
 Will find at once a region of his own,  
 A bower for his spirit, and will steer  
 To alleys where the fir-tree drops its cone,  
 Where robins hop, and fallen leaves are sear.

1817.

## TO SPENSER

SPENSER ! a jealous honourer of thine,  
 A forester deep in thy midmost trees,  
 Did last eve ask my promise to refine  
 Some English that might strive thine ear to  
 please.

But Elfin Poet 'tis impossible  
 For an inhabitant of wintry earth  
 To rise like Phœbus with a golden quill  
 Fire-wing'd and make a morning in his mirth.  
 It is impossible to escape from toil  
 O' the sudden and receive thy spiriting :  
 The flower must drink the nature of the soil  
 Before it can put forth its blossoming :  
 Be with me in the summer days and I  
 Will for thine honour and his pleasure try.

*February 5, 1818.*

‘ KEEN, FITFUL GUSTS ARE WHISP’RING  
 HERE AND THERE ’

KEEN, fitful gusts are whisp’ring here and  
 there  
 Among the bushes half leafless, and dry ;  
 The stars look very cold about the sky,  
 And I have many miles on foot to fare.  
 Yet feel I little of the cool bleak air,

Or of the dead leaves rustling drearily,  
 Or of those silver lamps that burn on high,  
 Or of the distance from home's pleasant lair :  
 For I am brimful of the friendliness  
 That in a little cottage I have found ;  
 Of fair-hair'd Milton's eloquent distress,  
 And all his love for gentle Lycid drown'd ;  
 Of lovely Laura in her light green dress,  
 And faithful Petrarch gloriously crown'd.

*Spring 1816.*

'TO ONE WHO HAS BEEN LONG  
 IN CITY PENT'

**T**O one who has been long in city pent,  
 'Tis very sweet to look into the fair  
 And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer  
 Full in the smile of the blue firmament.  
 Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,  
 Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair  
 Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair  
 And gentle tale of love and languishment ?  
 Returning home at evening, with an ear  
 Catching the notes of Philomel,—an eye  
 Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,  
 He mourns that day so soon has glided by :  
 E'en like the passage of an angel's tear  
 That falls through the clear ether silently.

*June 1816.*

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S  
HOMER

MUCH have I travell'd in the realms of gold,  
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;  
 Round many western islands have I been  
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
 That deep-brow'd Homer rul'd as his demesne ;  
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :  
 Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
 When a new planet swims into his ken ;  
 Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
 He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men  
 Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—  
 Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

*Spring 1815.*

TO HAYDON

This sonnet was not originally written with a short thirteenth line,  
 but with the line

'Of mighty workings in some distant Mart?'

Haydon suggested the hiatus ; and Keats adopted it. In Tom Keats's copy-book the sonnet is headed simply 'Sonnet' and is dated 1816 merely. There is no variation from the printed text. It is almost superfluous to identify the two men referred to in the first six lines—Wordsworth and Leigh Hunt.

GREAT spirits now on earth are sojourning ;  
 He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake,  
 Who on Helvellyn's summit, wide awake,  
 Catches his freshness from Archangel's wing :



He of the rose, the violet, the spring,  
 The social smile, the chain for Freedom's sake :  
 And lo !—whose stedfastness would never take  
 A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering.  
 And other spirits there are standing apart  
 Upon the forehead of the age to come ;  
 These, these will give the world another heart,  
 And other pulses. Hear ye not the hum  
 Of mighty workings ?——  
 Listen awhile ye nations, and be dumb.

*November 19, 1816.*

## ON THE GRASSHOPPER AND CRICKET

THE poetry of earth is never dead :  
 When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,  
 And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run  
 From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead ;  
 That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead  
 In summer luxury,—he has never done  
 With his delights ; for when tired out with fun  
 He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.  
 The poetry of earth is ceasing never :  
 On a lone winter evening, when the frost  
 Has wrought a silence, from the stove there  
 shrills  
 The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,  
 And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,  
 The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

*December 30, 1816.*

## TO KOSCIUSKO

**G**OOD Kosciusko, thy great name alone  
 Is a full harvest whence to reap high feeling ;  
 It comes upon us like the glorious pealing  
 Of the wide spheres—an everlasting tone.  
 And now it tells me, that in worlds unknown,  
 The names of heroes, burst from clouds concealing,  
 And changed to harmonies, for ever stealing  
 Through cloudless blue, and round each silver throne.  
 It tells me too, that on a happy day,  
 When some good spirit walks upon the earth,  
 Thy name with Alfred's, and the great of yore  
 Gently commingling, gives tremendous birth  
 To a loud hymn, that sounds far, far away  
 To where the great God lives for evermore.

 TO A FRIEND WHO SENT ME  
 SOME ROSES

**A**S late I rambled in the happy fields,  
 What time the sky-lark shakes the tremulous dew  
 From his lush clover covert ;—when anew  
 Adventurous knights take up their dinted shields :

I saw the sweetest flower wild nature yields,  
 A fresh-blown musk-rose; 'twas the first that  
 threw

Its sweets upon the summer : graceful it grew  
 As is the wand that queen Titania wields.

And, as I feasted on its fragrancy,

I thought the garden-rose it far excell'd :

But when, O Wells ! thy roses came to me,

My sense with their deliciousness was spell'd :

Soft voices had they, that with tender plea

Whisper'd of peace, and truth, and friendliness  
 unquell'd.

*June 29, 1816.*

TO G. A. W.

**N**YMPH of the downward smile and sidelong  
 glance,

In what diviner moments of the day

Art thou most lovely ?—when gone far astray

Into the labyrinths of sweet utterance,

Or when serenely wand'ring in a trance

Of sober thought ?—or when starting away

With careless robe to meet the morning ray

Thou spar'st the flowers in thy mazy dance ?

Haply 'tis when thy ruby lips part sweetly,

And so remain, because thou listenest :

But thou to please wert nurtured so completely

That I can never tell what mood is best.

I shall as soon pronounce which Grace more neatly

Trips it before Apollo than the rest.

‘O SOLITUDE! IF I MUST WITH THEE  
DWELL’

O SOLITUDE! if I must with thee dwell,  
 Let it not be among the jumbled heap  
 Of murky buildings; climb with me the steep,—  
 Nature’s observatory—whence the dell,  
 Its flowery slopes, its river’s crystal swell,  
 May seem a span; let me thy vigils keep  
 ’Mongst boughs pavilion’d, where the deer’s swift  
 leap  
 Startles the wild bee from the fox-glove bell.  
 But though I’ll gladly trace these scenes with thee,  
 Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind,  
 Whose words are images of thoughts refin’d,  
 Is my soul’s pleasure; and it sure must be  
 Almost the highest bliss of human-kind,  
 When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

#### TO MY BROTHERS

S MALL, busy flames play through the fresh laid  
 coals,  
 And their faint cracklings o’er our silence creep  
 Like whispers of the household gods that keep  
 A gentle empire o’er fraternal souls.  
 And while, for rhymes, I search around the poles,  
 Your eyes are fix’d, as in poetic sleep,  
 Upon the lore so voluble and deep,  
 That aye at fall of night our care condoles.

This is your birth-day, Tom, and I rejoice  
 That thus it passes smoothly, quietly.  
 Many such eves of gently whisp'ring noise  
 May we together pass, and calmly try  
 What are this world's true joys, — ere the great  
 Voice,  
 From its fair face, shall bid our spirits fly?

*November 18, 1816.*

'AFTER DARK VAPORS HAVE OPPRESS'D  
 OUR PLAINS'

AFTER dark vapors have oppress'd our plains  
 For a long dreary season, comes a day  
 Born of the gentle South, and clears away  
 From the sick heavens all unseemly stains.  
 The anxious month, relieved of its pains,  
 Takes as a long-lost right the feel of May;  
 The eyelids with the passing coolness play  
 Like rose leaves with the drip of Summer rains.  
 The calmest thoughts come round us; as of leaves  
 Budding—fruit ripening in stillness—Autumn suns  
 Smiling at eve upon the quiet sheaves—  
 Sweet Sappho's cheek—a smiling infant's breath—  
 The gradual sand that through an hour-glass  
 runs—  
 A woodland rivulet—a Poet's death.

*January 31, 1817.*

WRITTEN AT THE END OF 'THE  
FLOURE AND THE LEFE'

THIS pleasant tale is like a little copse :  
 The honied lines do freshly interlace  
 To keep the reader in so sweet a place,  
 So that he here and there full-hearted stops ;  
 And oftentimes he feels the dewy drops  
 Come cool and suddenly against his face,  
 And by the wandering melody may trace  
 Which way the tender-legged linnet hops.  
 Oh! what a power hath white Simplicity !  
 What mighty power has this gentle story !  
 I that for ever feel athirst for glory  
 Could at this moment be content to lie  
 Meekly upon the grass, as those whose sobbings  
 Were heard of none beside the mournful robins.

*February 1817.*

TWO SONNETS

I

TO HAYDON, WITH A SONNET WRITTEN ON SEEING  
THE ELGIN MARBLES

HAYDON! forgive me that I cannot speak  
 Definitively on these mighty things ;  
 Forgive me that I have not Eagle's wings—  
 That what I want I know not where to seek :



And think that I would not be over meek  
 In rolling out upfollow'd thunderings,  
 Even to the steep of Heliconian springs,  
 Were I of ample strength for such a freak—  
 Think too, that all those numbers should be thine ;  
 Whose else? In this who touch thy vesture's  
 hem?

For when men star'd at what was most divine  
 With browless idiotism—o'erwise phlegm—  
 Thou hadst beheld the Hesperean shine  
 Of their star in the East, and gone to worship them.

## II

## ON SEEING THE ELGIN MARBLES

**M**Y spirit is too weak—mortality  
 Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,  
 And each imagin'd pinnacle and steep  
 Of godlike hardship, tells me I must die  
 Like a sick Eagle looking at the sky.

Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep  
 That I have not the cloudy winds to keep,  
 Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.  
 Such dim-conceived glories of the brain  
 Bring round the heart an undescribable feud ;  
 So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,  
 That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude  
 Wasting of old Time—with a billowy main—  
 A sun—a shadow of a magnitude.

## ON A PICTURE OF LEANDER

**C**OME hither all sweet maidens soberly,  
 Down-looking aye, and with a chasten'd light,  
 Hid in the fringes of your eyelids white,  
 And meekly let your fair hands joined be,  
 As if so gentle that ye could not see,  
 Untouch'd, a victim of your beauty bright,  
 Sinking away to his young spirit's night,—  
 Sinking bewilder'd 'mid the dreary sea :  
 'Tis young Leander toiling to his death ;  
 Nigh swooning, he doth purse his weary lips  
 For Hero's cheek, and smiles against her  
 smile.

O horrid dream ! see how his body dips  
 Dead-heavy ; arms and shoulders gleam awhile :  
 He's gone ; up bubbles all his amorous breath !

*Summer 1817.*

WRITTEN ON A BLANK PAGE IN SHAKE-  
 SPEARE'S POEMS, FACING 'A LOVER'S  
 COMPLAINT'

**B**RIGHT star, would I were stedfast as thou  
 art—  
 Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night  
 And watching, with eternal lids apart,  
 Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,

The moving waters at their priestlike task  
 Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,  
 Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask  
 Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—  
 No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,  
 Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,  
 To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,  
 Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,  
 Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,  
 And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

*September 1820.*

'THE DAY IS GONE, AND ALL ITS  
 SWEETS ARE GONE!'

**T**HE day is gone, and all its sweets are gone!  
 Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand, and softer  
 breast,  
 Warm breath, light whisper, tender semi-tone,  
 Bright eyes, accomplish'd shape, and lang'rous  
 waist!  
 Faded the flower and all its budded charms,  
 Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,  
 Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,  
 Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise—  
 Vanish'd unseasonably at shut of eve,  
 When the dusk holiday—or holinight  
 Of fragrant-curtain'd love begins to weave  
 The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight;  
 But, as I've read love's missal through to-day,  
 He'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

*October 1817.*

ON SITTING DOWN TO READ 'KING  
LEAR' ONCE AGAIN

O GOLDEN tongued Romance, with serene  
lute!  
Fair plumed Syren, Queen of far-away!  
Leave melodizing on this wintry day,  
Shut up thine olden pages, and be mute:  
Adieu! for, once again, the fierce dispute  
Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay  
Must I burn through; once more humbly assay  
The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearian fruit:  
Chief Poet! and ye clouds of Albion,  
Begetters of our deep eternal theme!  
When through the old oak Forest I am gone,  
Let me not wander in a barren dream,  
But, when I am consumed in the fire,  
Give me new Phœnix wings to fly at my desire.

'WHEN I HAVE FEARS THAT I MAY  
CEASE TO BE'

WHEN I have fears that I may cease to be  
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming  
brain,  
Before high-piled books, in characterly,  
Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain;

When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,  
 Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,  
 And think that I may never live to trace  
 Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance ;  
 And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,  
 That I shall never look upon thee more,  
 Never have relish in the faery power  
 Of unreflecting love ;—then on the shore  
 Of the wide world I stand alone, and think  
 Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

*January 1818.*

### TO THE NILE

SON of the old moon-mountains African !  
 Chief of the Pyramid and Crocodile !  
 We call thee fruitful, and, that very while,  
 A desert fills our seeing's inward span ;  
 Nurse of swart nations since the world began,  
 Art thou so fruitful? or dost thou beguile  
 Such men to honour thee, who, worn with toil,  
 Rest for a space 'twixt Cairo and Decan?  
 O may dark fancies err ! they surely do ;  
 'Tis ignorance that makes a barren waste  
 Of all beyond itself, thou dost bedew  
 Green rushes like our rivers, and dost taste  
 The pleasant sun-rise, green isles hast thou too,  
 And to the sea as happily dost haste.

*February 4, 1818.*

TO A LADY SEEN FOR A FEW MOMENTS  
AT VAUXHALL

TIME'S sea hath been five years at its slow  
ebb,  
Long hours have to and fro let creep the  
sand,  
Since I was tangled in thy beauty's web,  
And snared by the unglowing of thine hand.  
And yet I never look on midnight sky,  
But I behold thine eyes' well memory'd light ;  
I cannot look upon the rose's dye,  
But to thy cheek my soul doth take its flight.  
I cannot look on any budding flower,  
But my fond ear, in fancy at thy lips  
And hearkening for a love-sound, doth devour  
Its sweets in the wrong sense:—Thou dost  
eclipse  
Every delight with sweet remembering,  
And grief unto my darling joys dost bring.

*February 4, 1818.*

WHAT THE THRUSH SAID

LINES FROM A LETTER TO JOHN HAMILTON  
REYNOLDS

THOU whose face hath felt the Winter's wind,  
Whose eye has seen the snow-clouds hung in  
mist,  
And the black elm tops 'mong the freezing stars,  
To thee the spring will be a harvest-time.



O thou, whose only book has been the light  
 Of supreme darkness which thou feddest on  
 Night after night when Phœbus was away,  
 To thee the Spring shall be a triple morn.  
 O fret not after knowledge—I have none,  
 And yet my song comes native with the warmth.  
 O fret not after knowledge—I have none,  
 And yet the Evening listens. He who saddens  
 At thought of idleness cannot be idle,  
 And he's awake who thinks himself asleep.

*February 19, 1818.*

### THE HUMAN SEASONS

**F**OUR Seasons fill the measure of the year ;  
 There are four seasons in the mind of  
 man :

He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear  
 Takes in all beauty with an easy span :  
 He has his Summer, when luxuriously  
 Spring's honied cud of youthful thought he  
 loves  
 To ruminatè, and by such dreaming nigh  
 His nearest unto heaven : quiet coves  
 His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings  
 He furleth close ; contented so to look  
 On mists in idleness—to let fair things  
 Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook.  
 He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,  
 Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

*March 1818.*

## TO HOMER

**S**TANDING aloof in giant ignorance,  
 Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,  
 As one who sits ashore and longs perchance  
 To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.  
 So thou wast blind;—but then the veil was  
 rent,  
 For Jove uncurtain'd Heaven to let thee  
 live,  
 And Neptune made for thee a spumy tent,  
 And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive ;  
 Aye on the shores of darkness there is light,  
 And precipices show untrodden green,  
 There is a budding morrow in midnight,  
 There is a triple sight in blindness keen ;  
 Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel  
 To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and  
 Hell.

1818.

 WRITTEN UPON THE TOP OF  
 BEN NEVIS

**R**EAD me a lesson, Muse, and speak it loud  
 Upon the top of Nevis, blind in mist !  
 I look into the chasms, and a shroud  
 Vapourous doth hide them,—just so much I  
 wist

Mankind do know of hell ; I look o'erhead,  
 And there is sullen mist,—even so much  
 Mankind can tell of heaven ; mist is spread  
 Before the earth, beneath me,—even such,  
 Even so vague is man's sight of himself !  
 Here are the craggy stones beneath my feet,—  
 Thus much I know that, a poor witless elf,  
 I tread on them,—that all my eye doth meet  
 Is mist and crag, not only on this height,  
 But in the world of thought and mental might !

*August 2, 1818.*

### TO SLEEP

**O** SOFT embalmer of the still midnight,  
 Shutting with careful fingers and benign  
 Our gloom-pleas'd eyes, embowered from the  
 light,  
 Enshaded in forgetfulness divine :  
 O soothest Sleep ! if so it please thee, close  
 In midst of this thine hymn my willing eyes,  
 Or wait the 'Amen,' ere thy poppy throws  
 Around my bed its lulling charities.  
 Then save me, or the pass'd day will shine  
 Upon my pillow, breeding many woes,—  
 Save me from curious Conscience, that still  
 lords  
 Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole ;  
 Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,  
 And seal the hushed Casket of my Soul.

*April 1819.*

## DEDICATION TO LEIGH HUNT, Esq.

G LORY and loveliness have pass'd away ;  
For if we wander out in early morn,  
No wreathed incense do we see upborne  
Into the east, to meet the smiling day :  
No crowd of nymphs soft voic'd and young, and gay,  
In woven baskets bringing ears of corn,  
Roses, and pinks, and violets, to adorn  
The shrine of Flora in her early May.  
But there are left delights as high as these,  
And I shall ever bless my destiny,  
That in a time, when under pleasant trees  
Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free,  
A leafy luxury, seeing I could please  
With these poor offerings, a man like thee.

1817

## NOTES

*The numbers refer to page and line of the text*

THE text of this selection from the poems of Keats is printed from the edition of Mr. H. Buxton Forman issued by Messrs. Gowans & Gray in 1900; and I am indebted to Mr. Forman for his kind permission to use so scrupulous and faithful a text.

In arranging my selections, I have been guided by a suggestion made in passing by Mr. Swinburne in the dedicatory epistle to the collected edition of his poems. 'It might,' he says, 'be thought pedantic or pretentious in a modern poet to divide his poems after the old Roman fashion into sections and classes. I must confess that I should like to see this method applied, were it but by way of experiment in a single edition, to the work of the leading poets of our own country and century; to see, for instance, their lyrical and elegiac works ranged and registered apart, each kind in a class of its own, such as is usually reserved, I know not why, for sonnets only.' This method, it seems to me, is peculiarly appropriate in the case of Keats, whose whole work is comprised within so few years, and whose whole work, it may be added, was written with so definite a sense of the formal qualities and distinctions of poetry. I confess that I had never realised the whole force and splendour (irregular as it is and may well be) of the sonnets until I saw the best of them set together in some kind of order or harmony. On the other hand, I had never realised, as this division into classes forces one to realise, how little of the singing quality Keats possessed, and how wholly his lyrical faculty had given itself up to the building of harmonies. I have found only two songs which seem to me worth giving. What surprises me is that so serious a lack should mean so little in our estimate of his genius.

In the notes which follow I have referred to a few important

variations of text, but for the most part have confined myself to giving some indication of the suggestion and origin of the poems, when possible from Keats' letters, or from the notes of contemporaries. Most of them I have found to my hand in Mr. Forman's rich, appropriate, and abundant notes, and I have not scrupled to make full use of them. Some, and some additions to and corrections of the dates of the poems given by Mr. Forman, I have found in Mr. E. de Sélincourt's recent and admirable edition, which contains, in its introduction and notes, the most valuable contributions which have yet been made to the study of what might be called the poetic evolution of Keats.

## NARRATIVE AND ROMANTIC POEMS

Page 1, l. 1. *Hymn to Pan*.—This 'very pretty piece of Paganism,' as Wordsworth, who heard Keats recite it at the house of Haydon, is said to have called it, follows line 221 (which the first line rhymes with) of Book I. of *Endymion*. What I have called *Phœbe's Roundelay*—

‘Then she,  
Sitting beneath the midmost forest tree,  
For pity sang this roundelay,’

follows line 145 of Book IV. What I have called the *Song of Cynthia's Wedding* follows, and its first couplet rhymes with line 562 of Book IV. It ends abruptly, and the line goes on—

‘More  
Endymion heard not.’

P. 44, l. 1. *Lamia*.—The origin of *Lamia* is given in the quotation which Keats inserted after the poem in the original edition of 1820:—

‘Philostratus, in his fourth book *de Vita Apollonii*, hath a memorable instance in this kind, which I may not omit, of one Menippus Lycius, a young man twenty-five years of age, that going betwixt Cencreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which taking him by the hand, carried him home to her house, in the suburbs of Corinth,



and told him she was a Phœnician by birth, and if he would tarry with her, he should hear her sing and play, and drink such wine as never any drank, and no man should molest him ; but she, being fair and lovely, would live and die with him, that was fair and lovely to behold. The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her a while to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, amongst other guests, came Apollonius ; who, by some probable conjectures, found her out to be a serpent, a lamia ; and that all her furniture was, like Tantalus' gold, described by Homer, no substance but mere illusions. When she saw herself descried, she wept, and desired Apollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant : many thousands took notice of this fact, for it was done in the midst of Greece.'—Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part III. Sect. ii. Memb. I, Subs. I.

P. 67, l. 8. *Isabella*.—The poem is founded on the fifth tale of the fourth day of Boccaccio's *Decameron* ; and the allusion to the 'sad ditty of this story born,' in the last stanza, has been cleared up by Mr. Forman, who, in the Appendix to the second volume of his library edition of Keats, gives a Sicilian song which once 'from mouth to mouth through all the country pass'd,' with a translation of it by Mr. John Payne.

P. 84, l. 17. *The Eve of St. Agnes*.—Mr. de Sélincourt quotes the following passage from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (Part II., sect. ii., mem. 3, subs. 1) as the probable suggestion to Keats of the subject : 'Tis their only desire if it may be done by Art, to see their husbands picture in a glass, they'll give anything to know when they shall be married, how many husbands they shall have, by *Crommyomantia*, a kind of divination with onions laid on the Altar on Christmas Eve, or by fasting on *St. Agnes' Eve* or Night, to know who shall be their first husband.'

P. 98, l. 1. *Hyperion*.—It seems probable that *Hyperion* was not begun earlier than November 1818, or continued later than April 1819. Mr. de Sélincourt, in his admirable and detailed account of the poem, points out that its sources were

probably to be found not in Lemprière and Horne Tooke, as has generally been asserted, but in passages of Chapman's *Iliad* (viii. 420-24, and xiv. 230), of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (iii. 7, 47), of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (i. 510 *et seq.*), and of Chapman's *Hesiod*. He also shows, with great probability, that 'Keats had modified his scheme of the poem considerably since his discussion of it with his friends, and that during the actual time of composition he had no intention whatever of writing an epic in ten books.' He conjectures that the poem 'would not have reached more than 1200-1500 lines, or four books of the length of the first and second,' and suggests the probable course it would have taken. The main reason of Keats for giving up the poem is stated in his letter to Reynolds of Sept. 22, 1819: 'I have given up *Hyperion*; there are too many Miltonic inversions in it—Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful, or rather artist's humour. I wish to give myself up to other sensations. English ought to be kept up.' It was at this time that Keats was most under the influence of Chatterton, of whom he wrote to George Keats in the same month: 'The purest English, I think—or what ought to be purest—is Chatterton's. . . . I prefer the native music of it to Milton's, cut by feet. I have but lately stood on my guard against Milton. Life to him would be death to me. Miltonic verse cannot be written, but is the verse of art. I wish to devote myself to another verse alone.' In the letter to Reynolds, immediately before the passage just quoted, he had said of Chatterton: 'He is the purest writer in the English language.' The influence of Chatterton had already become visible in Keats' work, especially in the exquisite fragment *The Eve of St. Mark*, probably written in January 1819. It was in his endeavour to get away from Milton, and to return to a style more really characteristic of himself, that Keats, in the last months of 1819, set himself to recast *Hyperion* in the form of a vision, of which some five hundred lines remain, originally published by Lord Houghton as the first draft, under the name *The Fall of Hyperion: a Vision*. It has only gradually become clear that this is a recast and not a first draft, and only in 1904 were the original MSS. of *Hyperion* and the Woodhouse transcript of *The Fall of Hyperion* discovered. Both were published, the former in

facsimile, by the Clarendon Press, under the editorship of Mr. de Sélincourt, who also gives in his edition of Keats a clear and exhaustive account, analysis, and interpretation of both poems, and of their significance in the development of Keats. No one has ever before made it so evident that, though as they both stand *Hyperion* is immeasurably superior as a poem to *The Fall of Hyperion*, there is in the latter a principle of growth which is not in the other, and which only mortal sickness may have struck down before it could ripen.

P. 125, l. 19. *La Belle Dame sans Merci*.—There are two versions of this poem, one published by Leigh Hunt in the *Indicator* of May 10, 1820, and the other by Lord Houghton in the *Literary Remains* of 1848, besides the copy made by Keats in a letter, in April 1819, and that made by Woodhouse in his commonplace-book. It seems evident that the *Indicator* text, here followed, contains Keats' latest revision, and as such we are bound to respect it. But I cannot help thinking that Keats was wrong in altering the 'kisses four' of the eighth stanza into the tamer if safer version by which he replaced them. This stanza originally read:—

' She took me to her elfin grot,  
And there she wept, and sigh'd full sore,  
And there I shut her wild wild eyes  
With kisses four.'

The next stanza began—

' And there she lulled me asleep,'

which was altered to avoid the repetition of the rhyme. There are other changes, not altogether for the better.

P. 127, l. 13. *The Eve of St. Mark*.—In a letter to George Keats, dated September 20, 1819, Keats writes from Winchester: 'The great beauty of poetry is that it makes everything, every place, interesting. The palatine Venice and the abbotine Winchester are equally interesting. Some time since I began a poem called the *Eve of St. Mark*, quite in the spirit of town quietude. I think it will give you the sensation of walking about an old country town in a coolish evening. I know not whether I shall finish it; I will give it as far as I

have gone.' Rossetti, in a letter to Mr. Forman, described this unfinished poem of Keats, with justice, as 'perhaps, with *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, the chastest and choicest example of his maturing manner.' He copies an extract from *The Unseen World* (1853), which seems to embody 'the superstition in accordance with which Keats meant to develop his poem.' This is the passage: 'It was believed that if a person, on St. Mark's Eve, placed himself near the church-porch when twilight was thickening, he would behold the apparition of those persons in the parish who were to be seized with any severe disease that year, go into the church. If they remained there it signified their death; if they came out again it portended their recovery; and the longer or shorter the time they remained in the building, the severer or less dangerous their illness.' Rossetti conjectured that 'the heroine—remorseful after trifling with a sick and now absent lover—might make her way to the minster-porch to learn his fate by the spell, and perhaps see his figure enter but not return.'

## DESCRIPTIVE AND REFLECTIVE POEMS

P. 132, l. 1. '*I stood tip-toe.*'—In this poem, apparently written in 1816, and originally referred to by Keats as *Endymion*, we see him preparing for the 'romance' of that name which was to be begun in the following year, and published in 1818.

P. 140, l. 5. *Sleep and Poetry*.—Cowden Clarke tells us that 'the framework and many of the lines of this poem were written by Keats in the library at Hunt's cottage, where an extemporary bed had been made up for him on the sofa.' In one of his letters Hunt says: 'Keats's *Sleep and Poetry* is a description of a parlour that was mine, no bigger than an old mansion's closet.'

P. 161, l. 12. *The Castle-Builder*.—This wild fragment, like a lunatic *Eve of St. Agnes* in some of its details, has enough spirit and fantasy to justify its presence among Keats' more serious work.

## SONGS

P. 164, l. 13. '*I had a dove.*'—Keats speaks of this song as 'a little thing I wrote off to some music, as it was playing.' There are many evidences of Keats' sensitiveness to music.

## ODES

P. 165, l. 21. *Ode to a Nightingale.*—A facsimile of the original MS. was published by Mr. Sidney Colvin in the *Monthly Review* of March 1903, in which it is interesting to note the first version of the two lines which seem to sum up the 'magic' of Keats. They were first written:—

'Charmed the wide casements, opening on the foam  
Of keelless seas, in faery lands forlorn;'

and the correction of the former made after the whole line had been written down, that of the latter 'instantly after the epithet "keelless" had been tried and found wanting.' The origin of the poem is thus described, with slight inaccuracies in detail (two half-sheets, not four or five scraps) by Charles Brown, with whom Keats was living at the time (May 1819) at Wentworth Place, Hampstead: 'In the spring of 1819 a nightingale had built her nest near my house. Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song; and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast table to the grass-plot under a plum-tree, where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books. On inquiry, I found those scraps, four or five in number, contained his poetic feeling on the song of our nightingale. The writing was not well legible; and it was difficult to arrange the stanzas on so many scraps. With his assistance I succeeded, and this was his *Ode to a Nightingale.*'

P. 168, l. 17. *Ode on a Grecian Urn.*—Mr. Colvin, in his *Life of Keats*, p. 174, says: 'It seems clear that no single extant work of antiquity can have supplied Keats with the suggestion for this poem. There exists, indeed, at Holland House, an urn wrought with just such a scene of pastoral



sacrifice as is described in his fourth stanza: and of course no subject is commoner in Greek relief-sculpture than a Bacchanalian procession. But the two subjects do not, so far as I know, occur together on any single work of ancient art; and Keats probably imagined his urn by a combination of sculptures actually seen in the British Museum with others known to him only from engravings, and particularly from Piranesi's etchings. Lord Holland's urn is duly figured in the *Vasi e Candelabri* of that admirable master.' Mr. de Séincourt aptly quotes, in parallel with the main idea on which the poem is based, the immortal sentence of Leonardo da Vinci: 'Cosa bella mortal passa e non d'arte.'

P. 170, l. 11. *Ode to Psyche*.—In a letter to George and Georgiana Keats, dated April 15, 1819, Keats writes: 'The following poem, the last I have written, is the first and only one with which I have taken even moderate pains; I have, for the most part, dashed off my lines in a hurry; this one I have done leisurely; I think it reads the more richly for it, and it will, I hope, encourage me to write other things in even a more peaceable and healthy spirit.'

P. 178, l. 17. *Robin Hood*.—This poem is a reply to three sonnets by John Hamilton Reynolds, apparently inscribed to Keats, in *The Garden of Florence*, 1821, which were originally printed in *The Yellow Dwarf* of February 21, 1818. In a letter dated February 3, 1818, Keats writes to Reynolds: 'Let us have the old poets and Robin Hood. Your letter and its sonnets gave me more pleasure than will the Fourth Book of *Childe Harold* and the whole of anybody's life and opinions. In return for your dish of filberts, I have gathered a few catkins.' He then copies the lines, and adds: 'I hope you will like them—they are at least written in the spirit of outlawry.' The same letter contains the *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern*.

P. 180, l. 25. *To Autumn*.—Keats writes to Reynolds from Winchester, September 22, 1819: 'How beautiful the season is now. How fine the air—a temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather—Dian skies. I never liked stubble-fields so much as now—aye, better than the chilly green of the spring. Somehow, a stubble plain looks warm, in the same way that some pictures look warm. This



struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it.'

P. 182, l. 1. *Ode on Melancholy*.—The original manuscript, printed by Lord Houghton, contained the following introductory stanza, which Keats omitted, we are told, lest 'the coarseness of the contrast should destroy the general effect of luxurious tenderness which it was the object of the poem to produce':—

' Though you should build a bark of dead men's bones,  
 And rear a phantom gibbet for a mast,  
 Stitch shrouds together for a sail, with groans  
 To fill it out, blood-stained and aghast,  
 Although your rudder be a dragon's tail  
 Long sever'd, yet still hard with agony,  
 Your cordage large uprootings from the skull  
 Of bald Medusa, certes you would fail  
 To find the Melancholy—whether she  
 Dreameth in any isle of Lethe dull.'

How much of Beddoes seems to be anticipated in this stanza!

P. 184, l. 1. *Hymn to Apollo*.—Mr. de Sélincourt, in the notes to his edition, says: 'Every one will agree with the margin notes of Rossetti (quoted *Manchester Quarterly*, 1883) that the *Ode* is 'very poor and puffy,' and the *Hymn* 'wretched but for a sense of metre. They are interesting chiefly as a record of the passing influence of the eighteenth century upon the form and diction of Keats.' With this, so far as it applies to the *Ode to Apollo*, I quite agree; but by no means in regard to the *Hymn*. The difference between them (even if they were, as they may have been, written near together) seems to me to be essential. The *Ode* is thoroughly archaic and conventional, but the *Hymn*, though violently faulty, is alive, and with a queer attractive personal quality.

P. 186, l. 1. *Lines on seeing a Lock of Milton's Hair*.—Keats writes in a letter to Bailey, dated January 23, 1818: 'I was at Hunt's the other day, and he surprised me with a real authenticated lock of *Milton's hair*. I know you would like what I wrote thereon, so here it is—as they say of a sheep in the Nursery Book.' He adds, after copying it: 'This I did at

Hunt's, at his request—perhaps I should have done something better alone and at home.' The lock of hair, or a very small portion of it, was given by Leigh Hunt to Mr. and Mrs. Browning on July 13, 1856, at Hampstead. 'He detached it with trembling fingers,' says Browning in a letter to Mr. Forman, printed in the library edition of Keats, 'and wrote on the envelope: "A bit of a lock of the hair of Milton. To Robert and E. B. Browning, from Leigh Hunt. God bless them."'

P. 187, l. 17. *Ode to Fanny*.—Mr. Forman conjectures that this poem was written when Keats was at Chichester in January 1819; and that the *Lines to Fanny* were written about the 12th of October in that year, 'the day before that on which Keats posted a letter at Westminster to Miss Brawne, saying *inter alia* that he had set himself to copy some verses out fair, and adding, "I cannot proceed with any degree of content. I must write you a line or two and see if that will assist in dismissing you from my mind for ever so short a time."' It seems more probable, however, that Mr. de Sélincourt is right in thinking that the former poem belongs more properly to the spring of 1819. The sonnet, 'The day is gone, and all its sweets are gone,' is no doubt addressed to Fanny Brawne, and Mr. Forman couples it, with some probability, with a letter written in October 1819.

Not many of Keats' poems are definitely addressed to Fanny Brawne, as these three are; but the importance of her influence on his life and on his poetry can hardly be over-estimated. The letters to Fanny Brawne have been called unmanly, and their publication harshly and vehemently criticised. These letters, it seems to me, are of great importance in any consideration of the temperament of Keats, and their value as human documents would justify their publication even if they deserved all the harsh things that have been said of them. But they do not. They are the letters of an agony, written by a man dying feverishly to a woman whom he loves with a feverish kind of passion. They are morbid, if you will, they are distressing, infinitely pathetic. They show us the Keats of those passages in which Porphyro grows 'unnerved,' and Endymion 'swoons,' and Lycius is 'pale with pain.' They show us a nature aching with imagination, to which only two things exist: the desire of

ideal beauty, which is art, and the desire of human loveliness, concentrated upon one woman. 'You could not step or move an eyelid but it would shoot to my heart—I am greedy of you,' he writes, with precisely the same ecstasy grown painful through excess of itself that gives the poems those excessive, overcoming heats by which they move us. When Madeline

' Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one,'

when

' Ææa's isle was wondering at the moon,'

when, even, Endymion tells the sisterly moon

' No apples would I gather from the tree

Till thou hadst cooled their cheeks deliciously,'

there is, in all these instances of sensitiveness to sensation, whether, as in the first, warm and bodily, or, in the second, cold and abstract, or, in the third, childlike in the innocence of its voluptuousness, a certain intoxication of the imagination. Keats, rather than Shelley, might have said 'I am as a nerve,' and, to one whose whole life was imagination, and imagination like the continual touching of a nerve, only such a passion as the passion expressed in the letters to Fanny Brawne was possible. Those letters are the outcry of one whose soul was formed for suffering, as ingeniously as his body was formed for suffering; they are the other side of his poetry, where his poetry was most personal and most impressive.

P. 191, l. 17. *Ode on Indolence*.—In the journal-letter, under date March 19, 1819, Keats writes: 'This morning I am in a sort of temper, indolent and supremely careless—I long after a stanza or two of Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*—my passions are all asleep, from my having slumbered till nearly eleven, and weakened the animal fibre all over me, to a delightful sensation, about three degrees on this side of faintness. If I had teeth of pearl and the breath of lillies, I should call it languor, but as I am [Keats notes in the margin: "Especially as I have a black eye"] I must call it laziness. In this state of effeminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of enticement and pain no unbearable power. Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as

they pass by me ; they seem rather like figures on a Greek vase, a man and two women whom no one but myself could distinguish in their disguise. This is the only happiness, and is a rare instance of the advantage of the body overpowering the mind.'

## SONNETS

P. 194, l. 1. '*Why did I laugh to-night?*'—In the journal-letter to George and Georgiana Keats, under date March 19, 1819, Keats writes : 'I am ever afraid that your anxiety for me will lead you to fear for the violence of my temperament continually smothered down : for that reason I did not intend to have sent you the following sonnet—but look over the two last pages and ask yourselves whether I have not that in me which will bear the buffets of the world. It will be the best comment on my sonnet ; it will show you that it was written with no Agony but that of ignorance ; with no thirst of anything but Knowledge when pushed to the point, though the first steps to it were through my human passions—they went away and I wrote with my Mind—and perhaps I must confess a little bit of my heart.' The sonnet follows, and he adds : 'I went to bed and enjoyed uninterrupted sleep. Sane I went to bed and sane I arose.'

P. 194, l. 16. *Sonnet on a Dream, after reading Dante's Episode of Paolo and Francesca.*—This sonnet, which Rossetti looked on as, with that on Chapman's Homer, 'by far the finest of Keats's sonnets,' is given by Keats in his journal-letter, dated April 15, 1819, together with the dream which led to it : 'The fifth canto of Dante pleases me more and more—it is that one in which he meets with Paolo and Francesca. I had passed many days in rather a low state of mind, and in the midst of them I dreamt of being in that region of Hell. The dream was one of the most delightful enjoyments I ever had in my life. I floated about in the whirling atmosphere as it is described with a beautiful figure, to whose lips mine were joined, as it seemed for an age—and in the midst of all this cold and darkness I was warm—even flowery tree-tops sprung up, and we rested on them, sometimes with the lightness of a cloud,

till the wind blew us away again. I tried a sonnet upon it—there are fourteen lines but nothing of what I felt in it—O that I could dream it every night.’ The sonnet follows.

F. 196, l. 16. *On the Sonnet.*—In a letter finished on May 3, Keats writes: ‘I have been endeavouring to discover a better sonnet stanza than we have. The legitimate does not suit the language well, from the pouncing rhymes; the other appears too elegiac, and the couplet at the end has seldom a pleasing effect. I do not pretend to have succeeded. It will explain itself.’ The sonnet follows.

P. 198, l. 16. ‘*Keen, fitful gusts are whip’ring here and there.*’—Cowden Clarke tells us that this sonnet was written on the occasion of Keats’ first visit to Leigh Hunt at his cottage in the Vale of Health, which seems to have been in the early spring of 1816.

P. 199, l. 10. ‘*To one who has been long in city pent.*’—We learn that this sonnet was written in the fields, June 1816. The first line was perhaps unconscious in its echo of Milton’s

‘As one who long in populous city pent.’

P. 200, l. 1. *On first looking into Chapman’s Homer.*—Cowden Clarke, in his ‘Recollections of John Keats’ in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* of February 1874, says: ‘A beautiful folio edition of Chapman’s translation of Homer had been lent me. . . . Chapman supplied us with many an after-treat; but it was in the teeming wonderment of this his first introduction, that, when I came down to breakfast the next morning, I found upon my table a letter with no other enclosure than his famous sonnet, *On first looking into Chapman’s Homer.* We had parted, as I have already said, at day-spring, yet he contrived that I should receive the poem from a distance of, maybe, two miles by ten o’clock.’ It was really, as Tennyson pointed out to F. T. Palgrave, Balboa, and not Cortez, of whom the story embodied in the last lines is told. Keats no doubt found it in a book which was a favourite of his at school, Robertson’s *History of America*. It has been clearly shown by Mr. de Sélincourt that the sonnet, which has been attributed to the year 1816 on the authority of Tom Keats, could not have been written later than the spring of 1815. The ‘symposium’ at



which Keats and Clarke made the acquaintance of Chapman was preceded by an invitation from Keats at 8 Dean Street to Clarke, who had lodgings in Clerkenwell; and Keats left Dean Street in the summer of 1815.

P. 200, l. 16. *To Haydon*.—In a letter to Haydon, dated November 20, 1816, Keats writes: 'Last evening wrought me up, and I cannot forbear sending you the following.' In the sonnet as it then reads the last line but one ended 'in some distant Mart.' In a second letter, written on the afternoon of the same day, Keats acknowledges an answer already received from Haydon, and says: 'Your letter has filled me with a proud pleasure, and shall be kept by me as a stimulus to exertion—I begin to fix my eye upon one horizon. My feelings entirely fall in with yours in regard to the Ellipsis, and I glory in it. The Idea of your sending it to Wordsworth put me out of breath—you know with what Reverence I would send my Well-wishes to him.' Lord Houghton says that 'Haydon, in his acknowledgment, suggested the omission of a part' of the sonnet; and it will be seen that Keats accepted the suggestion.

P. 201, l. 11. *On the Grasshopper and Cricket*.—This sonnet was written in competition with Leigh Hunt, and the lovely rivals both printed in the *Examiner* of September 21, 1817. Cowden Clarke, who was present, says: 'I cannot say how long the trial lasted. I was not proposed umpire; and had no stop-watch for the occasion. The time, however, was short for such a performance, and Keats won as to time.'

P. 202, l. 16. *To a Friend who sent me some Roses*.—A copy of this sonnet, made by Tom Keats, is headed *To Charles Wells on receiving a Bunch of Roses*, and dated June 29, 1816. The writer of *Joseph and his Brethren* has even yet received little of the recognition which is his due. 'This work affords,' says Rossetti, 'perhaps the solitary instance, within our period, of poetry of the very first class falling quite unrecognised and remaining so for a long space of time.' The reprint, with Mr. Swinburne's introduction, of 1876 has been long out of print; and it is to be hoped that a new edition may some day be printed from the fuller text in the possession of Mr. Buxton Forman.



P. 206, l. 1. *Sonnet written at the end of 'The Floure and the Lefe.'*—'It happened at the period when Keats was about publishing his first little volume of poems (in the year 1817); he was then living on the second floor of a house in the Poultry, at the corner of the court leading to the Queen's Arms tavern—that corner nearest to Bow church. The author had called upon him here, and finding his young friend much engaged, took possession of a sofa, and commenced reading from his then pocket-companion, Chaucer's *Flower and the Leaf*. The fatigue of a long walk, however, prevailed over the fascination of the verses, and he fell asleep. Upon awakening the book was still at his side; but the reader may conceive the author's delight upon finding the following elegant sonnet written in his book at the close of the poem. During my sleep Keats had read it for the first time; and, knowing that it would gratify me, had subjoined a testimony to its merit, that might have delighted Chaucer himself.'—Charles Cowden Clarke, *The Riches of Chaucer* (1835), vol. i. pp. 52, 53 (quoted by H. Buxton Forman in the Appendix to vol. ii. of his library edition of Keats).

P. 208, l. 16. *Sonnet written on the margin of 'A Lover's Complaint.'*—This sonnet, the last which Keats is known to have written, was written on a blank leaf of a Shakespeare (now in the possession of Sir Charles Dilke), facing the beginning of *A Lover's Complaint*. Lord Houghton tells us that it was written after 'a weary fortnight spent in beating about the Channel,' on the last voyage to Italy. Keats had landed on the Dorsetshire coast, and spent a bright day there. On September 28, which must be about the date of the sonnet, he had written in a letter to Brown: 'I wish for death every day and night, to deliver me from these pains, and then I wish death away, for death would destroy even these pains, which are better than nothing. Land and sea, weakness and decline, are great separators, but death is the great divorcer for ever. When the pang of this thought has passed through my mind, I may say the bitterness of death is passed.'

P. 211, l. 11. *To the Nile.*—In a letter dated February 16, 1818, Keats says: 'The Wednesday before last, Shelley, Hunt, and I wrote each a sonnet on the River Nile.' The sonnet of

Shelley was only discovered, among the papers of Leigh Hunt, in 1876.

### TO THE NILE

Month after month the gather'd rains descend,  
 Drenching yon secret Æthiopian dells,  
 And from the Desert's ice-girt pinnacles,  
 Where Frost and Heat in strange embraces blend  
 On Atlas, fields of moist snow half depend.  
 Girt there with blasts and meteors, Tempest dwells  
 By Nile's aerial urn, with rapid spells  
 Urging its waters to their mighty end.  
 O'er Egypt's land of memory floods are level,  
 And they are thine, O Nile ! and well thou knowest  
 That soul-sustaining airs and blasts of evil,  
 And fruits and poisons spring where'er thou flowest.  
 Beware, O man ! for knowledge must to thee,  
 Like the great flood to Egypt, ever be.

Hunt's sonnet was published in *Foliage*.

### THE NILE

It flows through old hush'd Egypt and its sands,  
 Like some grave mighty thought threading a dream ;  
 And times and things, as in that vision, seem  
 Keeping along it their eternal stands,—  
 Caves, pillars, pyramids, the shepherd bands  
 That roam'd through the young world the glory extreme  
 Of high Sesostris, and that southern beam,  
 The laughing queen that caught the world's great hands.  
 Then comes a mightier silence, stern and strong,  
 As of a world left empty of its throng,  
 And the void weighs on us ; and then we wake,  
 And hear the fruitful stream lapsing along  
 'Twixt villages, and think how we shall take  
 Our own calm journey on for human sake.'

Whichever sonnet may be the finest as a sonnet, there is no doubt that the finest line is Leigh Hunt's.

P. 212, l. 16. *What the Thrush said.*—This title is Mr. Forman's. The lines are found in a letter of Keats to Reynolds, bearing the postmark 'Hampstead, Feb. 19, 1818': 'I was led into these thoughts, my dear Reynolds, by the beauty of the morning operating on a sense of Idleness—I have not read any books—the morning said I was right—I had no idea but of the morning, and the thrush said I was right, seeming to say—' And then the lines follow.

P. 214, l. 16. *On Ben Nevis.*—Rossetti described this sonnet as 'perhaps the most thoughtful of Keats.' Lord Houghton says: 'From Fort William Keats mounted Ben Nevis. When on the summit a cloud enveloped him, and sitting on the stones, as it slowly wafted away, showing a tremendous precipice into the valley below, he wrote these lines.'

P. 216, l. 1. *To Leigh Hunt, Esq.*—This sonnet forms the dedication to Keats' first volume, the *Poems* of 1817. Cowden Clarke relates that 'on the evening when the last proof-sheet was brought from the printer, it was accompanied by the information that if a "dedication to the book was intended it must be sent forthwith." Whereupon he withdrew to a side table, and in the buzz of a mixed conversation (for there were several friends in the room) he composed and brought to Charles Ollier, the publisher, the Dedication Sonnet to Leigh Hunt.'

## GLOSSARY

*The numbers refer to the page of the text and the line  
wherein the word explained occurs*

- Æthon* (sub.), one of the horses of the Sun, 15, 13  
*Amort* (adj.), spiritless, dejected, 87, 3  
*Andromeda* (sub.), the Greek maiden who was fettered to a rock to be devoured by a sea-monster, that the wrath of Neptune might be appeased; Perseus, returning from the slaughter of the Gorgon Medusa, delivered her by showing Medusa's head to the monster, which was turned into stone, 196, 16  
*Argus*, a son of Arestor, and as he had one hundred eyes, only two of which slept at one time, Juno set him to watch Io, whom Jupiter had changed into a heifer; Mercury, however, lulled all his eyes to sleep with his pipe and then slew him, 194, 17
- Baaing* (adj.), sheep-like, 3, 27  
*Bale* (sub.), misfortune, 138, 4  
*Basil* (sub.), a fragrant aromatic plant, used largely in continental cookery, 42, 21  
*Beadsman* (sub.), one employed or endowed to pray for others, 84, 22  
*Besprent* (verb), sprinkled over: a derivative of the old A.S. verb *besprengan*, 49, 1  
*Bibbers* (sub.), drinkers, 42, 15  
*Bourn* (sub.), home, resting-place, 58, 5  
*Brede* (sub.), an obsolete form of *braid*, 49, 11  
*Buttressed* (adj.), concealed, shielded, 87, 10
- Caduceus* (sub.), the rod wielded by Mercury, which was surmounted by two wings and two serpents, 48, 17  
*Cirque-couchant* (adj.), lying coiled in a series of circles, 45, 19  
*Clenches* (sub.), grips, 11, 5

- Columbine* (sub.), the popular name of *Aquilegia*, of which meadow-rue is the best known kind, 42, 21
- Colure* (sub.), one of two great circles supposed to intersect each other at right angles in the poles of the equator, 106, 22
- Couverture* (sub.), covering, shelter, concealment, 33, 18
- Daft* (verb), fooled, deceived, past of *daff*, 62, 9
- Dispart* (verb), analyse, separate, 50, 17
- Doris* (sub.), a goddess of the sea, daughter of Oceanus and Tethys; she married Nereus and became the mother of the Nereides, 36, 1
- Dryope*, a nymph of Arcadia, the mother of Pan by Mercury, 3, 7
- Eolus* (sub.), God of the Winds, 34, 11
- Gloam* (sub.), gloaming or twilight, 127, 5
- Glower* (verb), to stare fixedly, 130, 10
- Gordian* (adj.), knotted like the Gordian knot, 19, 20
- Gulphs* (verb), swallows eagerly, 34, 16
- Gurge* (sub.), a whirlpool, 110, 5
- Habergeon* (sub.), a piece of armour to defend the neck and breast, 158, 1
- Hamadryad* (sub.), a wood-nymph who, according to classic mythology, was supposed to live and die with the tree in which she dwelt, 1, 5
- Iris*, the rainbow, 31, 1
- Kirtle* (sub.), a kind of petticoat, 50, 10
- Kosciusko* (sub.), the hero who distinguished himself in the struggles made for freedom by Poland, 152, 27; 202, 1
- Lazar* (sub.), a leper, 71, 14
- Libbard* (sub.), leopard, 63, 3
- Lycæus* (sub.), a mountain of Arcadia on which was a temple sacred to Jupiter, and also sacred to Pan, whose festivals were celebrated there; hence they were called 'Lycœa,' 3, 23

*Melpomene* (sub.), the Muse of tragedy, 82, 12

*Misting* (verb), spreading vapour over Nature's face, 5, 8

*Morpheus* (sub.), God of Sleep, 7, 24

*Nadir*, the point of the heavens diametrically opposite to the zenith, 106, 24

*Naiad* (sub.), certain inferior deities who presided over rivers, springs, wells, and fountains, 2, 20

*Palatine* (adj.), pertaining to a palace or king's house, 51, 3

*Paynim* (sub.), a pagan, a heathen, 93, 9

*Penetrant* (adj.), far-seeing, observant, 58, 7

*Perceant* (adj.), piercing, 66, 29

*Pettish* (adj.), narrow, ill-defined, 50, 15

*Plaining* (verb), to complain or lament, 14, 24

*Plantain* (sub.), a food-plant of great value in tropical countries: akin to the banana, 61, 7

*Pleach* (verb), to intertwine or intertwist as in the case of branches, 33, 15

*Polypheme* (sub.), Polyphemus, one of the Cyclops, fabled monsters in the form of men, of gigantic stature, who had but one eye, and assisted Vulcan in his working in metals; the workshop of the Cyclops was supposed to be Stromboli, 147, 31

*Raught* (verb), reached: an obsolete past tense and past participle of *reach*, 31, 7

*Realmless* (adj.), that had been deprived of a realm, 98, 19

*Regalities* (sub.), kingdoms, 4, 18

*Savory* (sub.), a kind of thyme, used as a culinary seasoning, 42, 20

*Sleight* (sub.), art, spell, 53, 13

*Somdel* (sub.), something, 131, 5

*Spooning* (adj.), scudding before the wind, 6, 1

*Spright* (sub.), elf or inferior spirit, 147, 14

*Spume* (sub.), froth, 24, 21

*Syrinx* (sub.), a nymph of Arcadia beloved by Pan; she became a reed to escape from his pursuit, whereupon he made the pipe called the *Syrinx*, 1, 12



*Tambour-frame* (sub.), a frame on which muslin or other material is stretched for embroidery, 90, 25

*Thea* (sub.), a daughter of Uranus and Terra; she married her brother Hyperion, by whom she had the Sun, Moon, Aurora, &c., 101, 4

*Tiar* (sub.), tiara or triple crown worn by the pope: any lofty crown, 46, 2

*Unshent* (adj.), not disgraced, 50, 20

*Urganda* (sub.), an enchantress in *Amadis de Gaul*, 158, 23

*Utterless* (adj.), that cannot be uttered, 112, 31

*Vermeil* (adj.), silver-gilt, 104, 22

*Wannish* (adj.), wanting colour: pale, sickly, 46, 1

*Whortleberry* (sub.), the bilberry, or Scottish blaeberry, 77, 12

*Writhen* (verb), twisted, 20, 23

*Yean* (verb), to bring forth, 148, 23

*Zenith* (sub.), the point of the heavens that is exactly overhead, 106, 25

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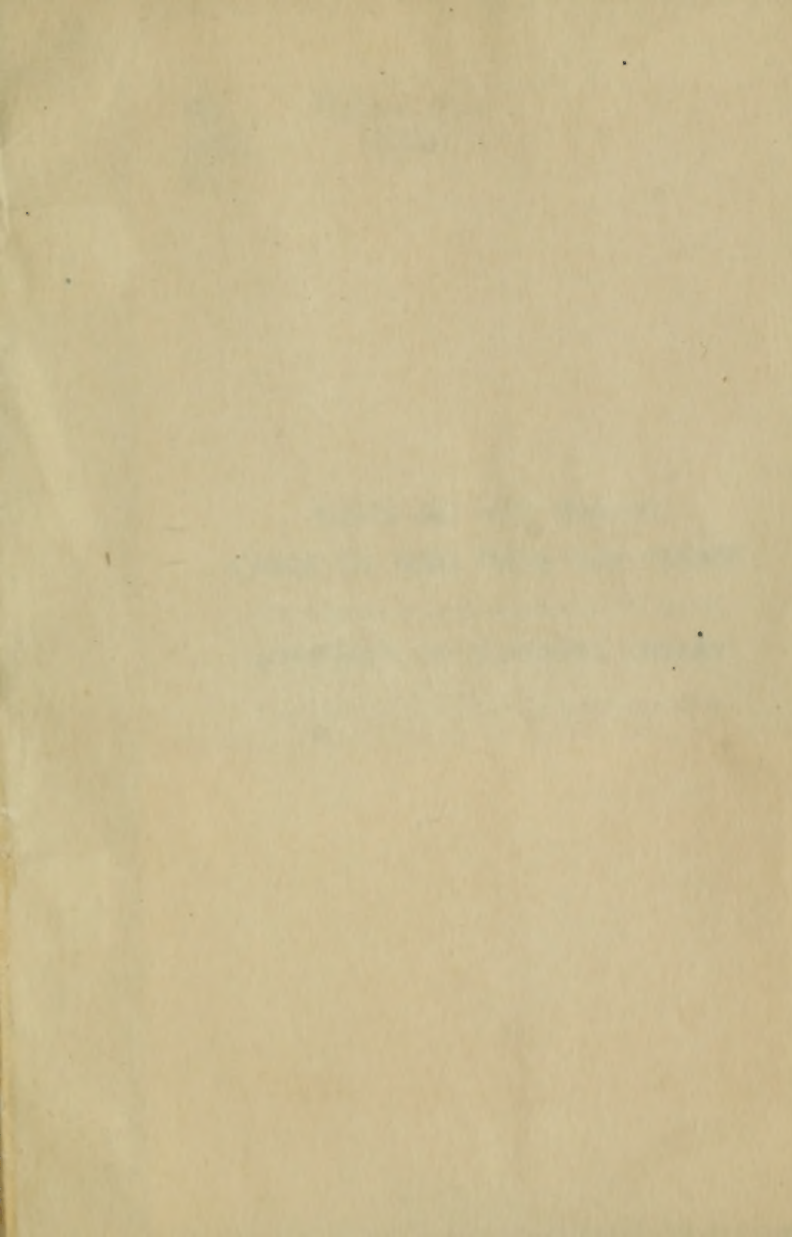
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